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*Wittgensteinian Descriptivism*  
*and*  
*Concepts of Self-Renunciation*

Thesis Submitted for the Degree

of Ph.D. in Philosophy

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**WITTGENSTEINIAN DESCRIPTIVISM AND  
CONCEPTS OF SELF-RENUNCIATION**

**Part I** presents a systematic presentation of what is termed 'the Wittgensteinian position', broken down into eight theses, each of which is thought of as intrinsic to self-renouncing faith.

**Part II** consists of three case-studies examining the conception of self-renouncing faith found in the works of Francois Mauriac, Georges Bernanos, and Patrick White. Distinct divergencies from many of the Wittgensteinian theses are unearthed.

**Part III** traces the roots of each of the Wittgensteinian theses to their sitz im leben in a strain of neo-Romanticism centred on securing independence of the world. Connections are made to Tolstoy, Emerson, Rilke, Trakl and Von Hofmannsthal.

**Part IV** argues that each case study in Part II runs counter to the Wittgensteinian position in one of three ways:

- (1) not having some theses which are proposed by the Wittgensteinian position to be intrinsic to self-renouncing faith;
- (2) deeming some theses which are proposed by the Wittgensteinian position to be intrinsic to self-renouncing faith as either (2.1) not inherently self-renouncing or (2.2) actually incompatible with the understanding of self-renunciation exemplified in the case-study;
- (3) having a different logical structure to its model of self-renouncing belief from that of the Wittgensteinian position.

Points (1), (2) and (3), and particularly points (2.1) and (2.2), suggest that self-renouncing faith is not the unitary phenomenon assumed by the Wittgensteinian position. The case-studies represent three distinct models of self-renouncing faith. These models have no place for the self-concern that characterises the Weltbild of self-concern with which the Wittgensteinian position is impregnated.

There follows a broad discussion of the implications of the above findings for the Wittgensteinian position, including Wittgenstein's status as a religious thinker, the way a descriptivist methodology should be understood, the blanket exclusion of the metaphysical from religious belief and the over-simple portrayal of religious belief as a conceptual orientation to the world.

Emyr Vaughan Thomas

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## PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED PORTIONS OF THIS THESIS

The following portions of this work derive from material already published by the author:

- \* Those parts of Chapters 1 and 5 dealing with the 'Perspective-thesis' utilise sections of my paper 'Wittgensteinian Perspectives Sub Specie Aeternitatis' which appeared in Religious Studies, 31, 1995.
- \* Several paragraphs from my paper 'Innocence', which appeared in Philosophy 69, 1994, have been included in the discussion of the idea of the 'spirit of childhood' in Chapter 3.
- \* Some paragraphs from my paper 'D.Z. Phillips and Religious Belief as Perspective on Life', Scottish Journal of Religious Studies 14, 1993, have probably trickled into Chapter 2, though the discussion in the latter is considerably expanded in scope and related to a broader span of Wittgensteinian traits.
- \* Some references to the argument contained in my paper 'D.Z. Phillips, Self-Renunciation and the Finality of Death', Religious Studies 28, 1992, are made in Chapter 6. (The extent of indebtedness to that paper is readily deducible from the text of the chapter).

Some paragraphs from Chapter 5 have been considerably re-worked and expanded into an article entitled 'Wittgenstein and Tolstoy: The Authentic Orientation'. This has recently been accepted for publication in Religious Studies.

## REFERENCES

The system of referencing is explained in the note at the beginning of the bibliography. As explained there, full bibliographic details of works cited on a one-off basis are given in brackets in the text and nowhere else (i.e. these are not listed in the bibliography). More frequently cited works have been given an abbreviation which can be 'de-coded' by referring to the abbreviation list at the end of this thesis and then the bibliography. The bibliography also lists works I have found particularly interesting or valuable.

# CHAPTER 1: SELF-RENOUNCING RELIGIOUS BELIEF: THE WITTGENSTEINIAN POSITION

## 1. Introduction

This thesis is based on the belief that self-renunciation is a useful and illuminating concept which enables us to appreciate the distinctive nature of the account of religious belief that has emerged in Wittgensteinian philosophy. D.Z. Phillips and Ilham Dilman have explicitly sought to elucidate the character of religious belief by reference to this concept. It is my contention that these two philosophers do not in this respect represent an engagement in an isolated or eccentric enterprise cut off from the mainstream of Wittgensteinian philosophy. Rather the implicit attempt at the ascription of a self-renouncing character to religious belief (by which I mean belief in God as found in the Christian traditions) is more widespread. In some complex ways it interlinks with some central facets both of Wittgenstein's own work and that of a far wider body of his followers who subscribe to a Wittgensteinian approach.

It is important to try to clarify what is meant by the phrase 'the Wittgensteinian approach'. I am not wanting to claim there is a single, discrete approach linked by a clear, explicit creed of orthodoxy. The influence of Wittgenstein has been very wide in philosophical circles. There is a loose grouping of philosophers engaged in continuing what they see as a distinctive approach to philosophy originated by Wittgenstein. However, this grouping of thinkers does not necessarily yield a clear, comprehensive, systematic and integrated view on the nature of religious belief as self-renouncing. Even Phillips and Dilman's accounts are not as broad nor as transparently integrated as I think they could be made.

A useful way of understanding the matter is the family resemblance idea introduced by Wittgenstein himself, in another connection. Members of a family generally do not have one physical feature in common. Rather, there are a series of features which different family members have in different combinations. The Wittgensteinian approach with respect to the self-renouncing character of religious belief consists of a series of such family traits. These traits are distributed among different philosophers in different proportions and in different ways.

The purpose of this first chapter is to present a systematic model which makes it a bit clearer just what the family features are.

In what follows the term 'Wittgensteinian position' is intended to apply at this 'family' level. The term 'Wittgensteinian approach' I use in a more general, more nebulous sense in which there is no clear implication of a distinct logical model being implied at all. None of this is intended to conclusively deny that there may be more than one 'family' involved here.

The Wittgensteinian position can be divided into seven separate theses. These are set out in the remainder of this chapter. The theses are as follows: the Absoluteness-thesis, the Anti-Consolation-thesis, the Unreflectiveness-thesis, the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis, the Perspective-thesis, the Acceptance-thesis and the Anti-Justification theses. There is also what I shall call the 'Passivity-Implication'. (The latter is more an implication of some of the other theses rather than a full thesis in its own right). In the conclusion to this chapter the way these theses interlock to form a distinct model of self-renouncing belief, with the Absoluteness-thesis at its base, is outlined. Although my purpose in this first chapter is expository, some minor criticisms will emerge. But all such criticism is intended to do is to aid the process of exposition. The substantive points of criticism will be made in Chapter 6.



It is in Chapter 6 that I argue that the Wittgensteinian position consists of a model of self-renouncing faith which is based on certain assumptions about the concept of self-renunciation itself. The source of those assumptions is claimed to derive from what, in Chapter 5, are isolated as the roots of the Wittgensteinian position. Those assumptions preclude recognition of other distinctive models of self-renouncing faith and are contrary to what is appropriate for a purely descriptive account.

In the case studies which comprise chapters 2 - 4 I shall provide three other distinctive models of self-renouncing faith. For purposes of space, I shall not, in those chapters, discuss each of the Wittgensteinian theses in relation to each case-study. Rather, I shall concentrate on those theses which in my view either clearly mirror or significantly depart from the Wittgensteinian position. The case-studies in Chapters 2 - 4 are taken from the concepts of self-renouncing faith found in the novels of Francois Mauriac, Georges Bernanos and Patrick White. Though derived from fictional narratives, such conceptions are not bizarre concoctions. They reflect the genuine and deeply held religious views of the authors and their background religious traditions. Even when the authors focus on apparently weird characters as heroes, the aim is always to make us see more clearly something about the character of religious faith which is overlooked when placed against a more conventional background. That said, the concept of self-renunciation is a difficult one to fully appreciate if one is immersed in the kind of liberalism prevalent in the West in the late twentieth century. To grasp it more deeply often requires pulling away from one's own immediate cultural influences. Where that can be accomplished perhaps what is given in the cases studies will seem less alien and recognised as genuine possibilities and viable modes of making sense of human life.

My aim, ultimately, is not to dismantle the Wittgensteinian position but in some modest way to press for its extension so that its application to religious belief will be broader. It

will be able to extend to 'new territory', to engage with some forms of belief it has hitherto dismissed as inauthentically religious. More will be said about this in Chapter 6.

## **2. The Absoluteness-Thesis**

The Wittgensteinian position holds that religious belief is an absolute. That is, it is an end in itself and as such is discontinuous with all relative ends. All relative ends have to do with the self and its machinations for its own solace and security.

One example is D.Z. Phillips's adoption of the distinction between absolute and relative judgements, derived from Wittgenstein's 'Lecture on Ethics'. A relative judgement about an action can be supported by reference to information about how that action contributes to a further end. If someone says: 'Make sure you secure that strip before you start drilling', this imperative can be supported by reference to the likely unpleasant consequences of not securing the strip. In contrast, an absolute judgement cannot be supported by reference to a further end. 'You ought to want to behave better', someone might insist. But if another replies, 'What if I don't?', then no further reasons related to further ends can be given. Phillips claims belief in God is an absolute in just this way.

...(I)f a man urges someone to come to God, and he asks 'What if I don't?', what more is there to say? Certainly one could not get him to believe by telling him that terrible things will happen to him...(For he would then be)...believing in the best thing for himself...(and not in God) (RBLG 124).

The idea is that belief in God cannot logically come about through fear. For if fear is what prompts belief, then what we are describing is not belief in God at all but a policy for the welfare of the self. The situation is akin to the Glauconian question asked by Father Sergius in Winch's account of an example derived from a story by Tolstoy.

In the Father Sergius example Winch gives an account of the difference in Sergius' faith at the time of his succumbing to temptation from what it was previously. At the point of succumbing to temptation Sergius' religious life changed in character. Previously, the problem of lust was '... understood by him from the perspective of a genuine religious belief...(and)...it was not then a case of setting the satisfaction of his desire alongside the demands of his religion and choosing between them. The fulfilment of his religious duties was not then for him an object to be achieved' (EA 189). At the time of succumbing to temptation, however, Sergius' faith had become a matter of 'an object to be achieved'. As such, it had become a relative end - an avenue to his own satisfaction.

Winch's account contains an implicit view of the nature of self-renunciation which underlies this understanding of there being these two distinct and discontinuous periods in Sergius's spiritual life (corresponding, respectively, to cases of genuine and corrupt forms of religious belief). When religious belief is a matter of something to be achieved Winch says that the 'Glauconian question' arises. This is the question raised in expectation of an answer as to why the religious life is worthwhile. In the particular example of Sergius it is found in the form: 'What does it matter?'. This question is inviting '...a judgement explaining why religious purity is more important than the satisfaction of lust...' (EA 189). In asking this question Sergius '...contemplated the religious life as an object and asked what there was about it that made it worth while' (EA 190). Winch comments

But just as Adeimantus noted that when people commend justice, what they commend 'is not justice itself, but the respectability it brings', so Sergius found that if he tried to commend the religious life, what he was commending was not that at all, but the kudos and admiration it brought him' (EA 190).

A little further on Winch adds

If one tries to find in the object of contemplation that which makes it admirable,

what one will in fact see is the admiration and applause which surrounds it..(EA 190).

In so valuing the religious life for the admiration it brought, Sergius '... could not help feeling pleasure in it'(EA 191). This gave Sergius' faith the character of a means to an end, namely self-fulfilment.

Winch gives us an important sense of the distinction between an absolute conception of ethics and a conception which looks at the ends in terms of desires which morality serves. The latter type of conception has enjoyed contemporary support in, for example, some works by Phillips Foot ('Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives', Philosophical Review 81, 1972) and Bernard Williams ('Egoism and Altruism' and 'Morality and the Emotions' in his Problems of the Self, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973). But an absolute conception of ethics is much better able to account for the logical distinction between the way desire influences a person and the way moral claims make demands on him or her. The reality of this distinction leads even Williams to talk of altruism as a '...general disposition to regard the interests of others...as making some claim on one, and, in particular, as implying the possibility of limiting one's projects' (Problems of the Self, 250). To see their interests as having a claim on one is something very different from one simply having the desire to assist them.

A further example of the Absoluteness-thesis is found in R.F. Holland's interpretation of Kierkegaard's idea of an eternal resolution as not involving acting for the sake of some end. 'In so far as one's doings cease to be...for the sake of some end...they no longer amount to bringing about...they approximate to taking things as they are, or indeed to suffering. And it is in suffering that...freedom is said to be greatest' (AE 79). Of course, some forms of endurance can be for an end, for a purpose which it is hoped to realise. But Holland's point relates to a form of endurance that is logically not ends-

directed. Elsewhere Holland stresses how absolute goodness is 'antithetical to assertion of the self' (AEMIP 177) and how it involves a 'moral geometry which puts the doing of evil outside the agent's limit, while providing him with infinite space in which to suffer it...Absolute ethics is the ethics of forgoing' (AEMIP 182-183).

This helps us to recognise how the idea of an absolute is irreducible to the parameters of a consequentialist ethic, such as Utilitarianism. In some versions of the latter each agent counts as a unit, a unit whose pleasures or wellbeing can be aggregated along with others to arrive at the most favourable total distribution. Arriving at such a distribution may require some units to be dispensable. But if all are to be given equal treatment and some turn out dispensable then this affects the status of even those units that form part of the majority. The lack of dispensability of their needs is not something that pertains to them. It merely arises randomly from the way the contingencies happen to be structured in a particular distribution. Further, on such a model the notion of a sacrifice of the self can never have the same status as that in an absolute conception. A utilitarian saint would sacrifice him or herself for the best probable distribution of wellbeing. Though not all varieties of utilitarianism allow this form of sacrifice, even those that do allow it reflect only a contingent connection between sacrifice of self and what is ethical. Only if sacrifice of self leads to desirable consequences is it ethical. This is not the case with the Absoluteness-thesis. Its proponents affirm that allegiance to what is absolute is intrinsically, not contingently, self-renouncing. To hold something as absolute is necessarily to assign a limit to the self's demands. Thus an absolute conception of ethics is in principle a self-curtailling conception.

..

For this reason, an absolute view of ethics sits uneasily with an Aristotelian view of the good life. For example, the modern Aristotelianism found in Jean Hampton's paper 'Selflessness and Loss of Self' (in eds. E.F. Paul, F.D. Miller and J. Paul, Altruism,

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993) involves claiming that we are sometimes morally required to benefit ourselves over and against others. Development of the self is something we are obliged to give attention to. There is no such necessary obligation on an absolute construal of morality. In J.L. Stocks' words, morality '...may call on a man at any moment to surrender the most promising avenue to his own moral perfection' (Morality and Purpose, London: Routledge, 1969, 29).

One further illustration of the Absoluteness-thesis is found in connection with Wittgensteinian accounts of the total disinterestedness ascribed to love of God. Dilman writes: 'If...love is pure, it must not be sustained by any reward - goodness must be its own reward' (PPL 90). Again, 'where there is genuine love the lover does not act with an eye on love's reward which is its return' (LHS 87). Dilman also says that genuine love is not a form of 'manipulation' (LHS 86). The implication is that it would be if it were a means of attaining a reward. D.Z Phillips says that Christian love of the neighbour is '...not the means whereby some further end is realised' (FPE 27).

It is less than clear whether the nature of the disinterestedness found in various forms of Christian love can be neatly captured by the formula that such love should be an end in itself. For this implies a total separation from concerns for self-fulfilment. This is an idea which, as we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3, has no place in some conceptions of self-renouncing faith.

Someone might be tempted to ask the question: how does something come to be established as an absolute? The Wittgensteinian position denies that argument can ever achieve this. Rather, the absoluteness of some things, such as belief in God, arises from the nature of the phenomena which make human life what it is. Thus Norman Malcolm, towards the end of his famous paper on Anselm's Ontological Argument, considers why human beings have even formed the concept of an infinite being. He then suggests some of the

background conditions for the emergence of this idea. Among them is guilt, guilt beyond all measure, and the storm in the soul that seeks out a forgiveness that is beyond all measure. D.Z Phillips has explored the Sitz im Leben of religious concepts in virtually all his extensive writings and found a far broader range of phenomena than mere guilt. Dilman and Winch similarly engage in a comparable form of often precise descriptive analysis. Of course, Wittgenstein himself, in his 'Lecture on Ethics', insisted that the idea of absolute value has to be traced to certain experiences in life - unless we do that we will never see it as anything but nonsensical. He also wrote: 'Life can educate us to a belief in God...sufferings of various sorts...(e)xperiences, thoughts, - life can force this concept on us' (CV 86).

Seeing something as having absolute value is deemed by the Wittgensteinian position to be incompatible with having an explanatory, scientific-analytical attitude toward it. Thus Wittgenstein, in the 'Lecture on Ethics', suggests that our wonder at the existence of the world is the kind of experience that gives rise to our notion of absolute value. Shields says that once an object '...of wonder and awe has become a riddle to be solved, an object to be placed within a scientific system, our respect for its immediate and intrinsic value is lost' (LSLW 112).

Throughout Wittgenstein's writings he advocates a change in our manner of seeing. The Tractatus ends with the claims that we must come to 'see the world aright' (TLP 6.54), and the Philosophical Investigations is full of allusions to our failure to see what is right before our eyes. This in turn requires not understanding but a change of will...Pride and conceit must give way to a sense of appreciation and wonder...(LSLW 113-4).

This strain survives in the writings of many of Wittgenstein's followers.

In holding to a radical separation between what is an end in itself and what are ends for the self the Wittgensteinian position is tacitly leaning on a particular conception of human autonomy. Many religious conceptions imply a different view of human nature, one in which Man is incapable of a response that is wholly discontinuous from the interests of self. This theme is one I shall explore further in the chapter on Francois Mauriac, where we find a concern with specifying ends which relate to the self in believing in God. However, clarification is called for here with respect to the capacity to specify 'ends' to belief in God which are separable from the believing itself.

The fact that a believer recognizes that there are separable 'ends' to belief in God is distinguishable from his or her seeking to believe in order to seek out and 'acquire' those ends solely for themselves. For it may be that the weak self seeks assistance. To seek assistance in one's motivation does not mean one's motivation is itself corrupt but merely that it is insufficient. As Harry Frankfurt has pointed out, the fact that we desire some things more than others does not mean that these things alone are indicative of where we stand. Rather, where we stand has also to be considered in relation to what we identify ourselves with (The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 82-83). On this view it is not inconsistent to seek to realise what we identify with by reference to ends for the self. At least, if such ends help us to gradually bring our actions and practical orientations into closer alignment with what we identify with. Such a process does not pollute our attachment to what we identify with. It does not de-authenticate what are the ultimate things we identify with. But it does mean that the idea that the only form of authentically moral or religious attachment is one in which something is an end in itself and necessarily unconnected with ends for the self is deficient. Striving for some end separable from belief in God may be a way in which the believer ties him or herself ever tighter to God through guiding his weak self away from



temptation or despair. The case studies in later chapters will contain fuller illustrations of this.

### 3. The Anti-Consolation Thesis

The Absoluteness-thesis entails that self-renouncing religious belief has no further ends. The Anti-Consolation thesis identifies consolation for the self as the fundamental further end that is incompatible with self-renouncing faith.

Consolation, a term I borrow from an analysis of Simone Weil by D.Z. Phillips (CP 99), comprises psychological satisfaction or solace. On the face of it the Wittgensteinian position seems, in the literature, to provide two versions of an Anti-Consolation thesis. The first version, let us call this the Weak Anti-Consolation thesis, excludes the compatibility of particular forms of consolation with self-renouncing faith. A second version, the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis, excludes consolation per se.

One form of the Weak Anti-Consolation thesis entails antipathy towards consolation deriving from the believer's sense of his or her own holiness. Thus Gaita claims that while for Aristotle the pleasurable appreciation of the nobility of one's deeds was no obstacle to a person's virtue, this cannot be said of Christianity. In the latter there is supposedly an exclusion of the person's delight in his or her virtue (GE 89). Similarly, Dilman says we attribute a love of goodness to the saint - he cannot assign it to himself because 'to do so would be to give himself credit and so to receive a reward' (PPL 90).

The point here is that it is the reward element, this psychological fulfilment of pleasurable appreciation, which precludes this being virtuous. According to some conceptions of self-renunciation such pleasurable appreciation is not a matter of gloating but is close to what Peter Geach describes as 'a special emotional attitude, a kind of wonder, that a lover has towards himself as the bearer of this precious thing, love' (The

Virtues, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 74). Alongside this, of course, we have to recognise a point made by Sutherland:

If a man's ethical intent is some form of integrity or selflessness, then this very intent can be the most insidious temptation of all...the fanatical search for purity...can secretly feed the furnaces of white-hot pride...(GJB 123).

As Dilman points out (SILAR 118) virtue is not something one can contemplate as an achievement.

Another example of a 'prohibited' consolation is that experience of having secured reprieve from adverse events in the world. An example is found in Winch's emphasis on the difference between a man who repays a debt to avoid criminal proceedings against him and one who does so 'simply because he owes it, without any thought of any unpleasant consequences to him ensuing from his not paying it' (EA 182).

A further example of prohibited consolation is that which seeks to alleviate the self's sense of its limitations by getting satisfaction from a sense of the certainty of being compensated for any suffering encountered. D.Z Phillips makes extensive use of Simon Weil's writings on this point. One example is the following in which she refers to

...the (assumed) right to a compensation for every effort whatever its nature, be it work, suffering or desire,...Every time we give anything out we have an absolute need that at least the equivalent should come into us...We think we have a right to it...We think we have claims everywhere (quoted CP 69).

Following Weil, Phillips stresses the self-centred, consoling thought that we have claims everywhere.

Another form of consolation that is excluded from being compatible with self-renouncing faith is that sense of a bond to God or to acting for Him. An example of this is to be found in Dilman's adoption of some thoughts by Simone Weil. Dilman says that

if God is conceived of as somehow metaphysically present when we act, His presence would be 'something we can have in view when acting...(and)...this would change the character of our actions, they would no longer involve self-renunciation' (SILAR 115). If God is construed as present then

...(e)ven a martyr going to his death is supported by the bond he feels unites him to God (SILAR 115).

Another example is the giving of bread to the starving. Weil is quoted: 'Christ thanks those who do not know to whom they are giving food'. Dilman says that

...the point is not only that a man who acts for the sake of a reward is doing something for himself, but that the thought that he is giving bread for the love of God...glorifies the action and instead of diminishing the agent it glorifies his sense of self (SILAR 115).

This is akin to Phillips' claims that self-renouncing faith does not go on 'hoping for a reciprocating touch' (RST 152).

With this latter point about diminishing the agent we can turn to discussing the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis which implies that self-renouncing faith can endure a total lack of consolation. Dilman says that a martyr going to his death

...does not feel alone and abandoned. This is not to deny that his action may not be completely selfless and disinterested. It may be so, but it does not diminish his sense of self. It does not replace it with a void. Christ felt no such support when he was nailed to the cross...he did not know that God was with him (SILAR 115).

Reference to the 'void' here implies not the absence of particular forms of consolation, but of all consolation. The self 'consents' to be nothing and is replaced by a void. The

...individual person is exposed to the thought that he is nothing...(and that there is)... nothing that he can be proud of, nothing on the support of which he can count,

nothing he can look forward to or expect any solace from (SILAR 23).

Self-renunciation is a state in which what 'goes out of a person goes one way; nothing that he anticipates eases his burden' (SILAR 117). D.Z. Phillips also talks of a state in which the believer realises that '...in the ego there is nothing whatever, no psychological element, which external circumstances could not do away with' (CP 70). Such a realisation suggests an antipathy to any consolation for the self. Phillips also directs us to the peasant in the poems of R.S. Thomas who is

...Endlessly ploughing, as though autumn

Were the one season he knew.

...No signals

Cheer him; there is no applause

...I can see his eye

That expects nothing, that has the rain's

Colourlessness...(RST 56).

Like the peasant, the self-renouncing believer is able '...to give up craving for a sense other than a sense of endurance...' (RST 55).

The Strong Anti-Consolation thesis has several difficulties. Firstly, it is hard to reconcile it with some religious conceptions in which the self is renounced through an identification with Christ in suffering. Thus interpreted the message of the Crucifixion is that the degree of abandonment suffered by Christ is not required of the ordinary believer. Secondly, a consequence of this Strong Anti-Consolation thesis is that it implies the virtual deletion of personality. Self-renunciation is conceived of as a stripping away, ultimately an almost literal absence, of the self. This view is rare in Christianity, perhaps only ever having gained any ground in early Syriac asceticism where it was not uncommon to live on top of columns for years on end or out in the open without shade from the sun and like the

animals, feeding on grass.

Thirdly, there are problems about the coherence of the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis. Surely there has to be some intentionality whereby the believer's commitment is for something. And if it is for something, there is, minimally, some sort of sense of a bond which, we can concede, can be in some sense consoling. Even if that bond is not to a God conceived metaphysically, it is a sense of being part of some mission or worthwhile purpose. (Such a purpose must, I think, be explicitly conceived of - a point to be taken up later in connection with what I call the Unreflectiveness-thesis). If we deny that then we will find it very difficult to distinguish some religious responses from some attempts at masochism. In this connection there is the example of St Lydwine, a saint of the Middle Ages who is featured in a novel by J.K. Huysmans which illustrates the doctrine of vicarious substitution. St Lydwine's body breaks out into a mass of boils and sores, a condition willingly accepted and prayed for as a means to take on some of the suffering of the world, channelling it away from others. Now this is an example in which there is a consolatory purpose to the suffering. Yet that is the very thing that makes this case intelligible as one of renunciation of self. Take away the purpose of deflecting suffering away from others and it appears as a repulsive attempt at masochism. This suggests that the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis is not logically viable. The fact that there is a consolatory sense of purpose or bond does not invalidate the authenticity of faith and is necessary for the intelligibility of something as an instance of self-renouncing faith.

As it happens a number of Wittgensteinian philosophers can be clearly seen not to subscribe to the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis when they acknowledge some consolatory role for religion. Tilghman talks approvingly of Bonhoeffer's 'consciousness of being borne up by a spiritual tradition that goes back for centuries and gives one a feeling of confidence and security in the face of all passing strains and stresses' (PR 194). Malcolm writes:

Yet there are many people, even in this technological and materialistic age, who observe religious practices - praying to God for help, asking Him for forgiveness, thanking him for the blessings of this life - and who thereby gain comfort and strength, hope and cheerfulness...Many would regard their faith as an undeserved gift from God. When overwhelmed by calamity, they arrive at a kind of reconciliation once they come to feel that these sufferings are God's will...(WRPV 84).

Finally, it is important to note how Dilman's allegiance to the Strong Anti-Consolation is shortlived. For when he goes on to contrast a case in which a father plays with his son out of a sense of duty with one in which the father plays 'out of pure joy and pleasure' he says:

...the latter is more selfless than the former; in the pleasure he shares with his child he has forgotten himself (SILAR 129).

He goes on to say of the former father that

...he keeps his 'ego' out at the expense of his 'power to give life to others' because he is unable to disentangle it from his passions and desires....this is (not) what self-renunciation means...a man who wants nothing for himself may be a person who does not know how to want anything without being greedy...(SILAR 129).

In this latter quotation Dilman gives us a clear argument against the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis.

We can extract a further argument from Dilman against the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis. This is found in his comments on the words: 'You cannot really think of others unless you can enjoy life'. Of these words he says:

This is only true if 'enjoying life' means...'finding sense in what you are doing'. But this is in no way incompatible with self-renunciation...(T)he man who wants nothing for himself is not one who wants nothing at all, since he may fight for others...with passion. As for the man who turns the other cheek, he is not necessarily one who

feels that nothing is worth defending...(SILAR 130).

Here Dilman seems to allow the consolation of a 'bond' when he talks of 'finding sense in what you are doing'. Further, I suggest the act of turning the other cheek can involve a sense of such a consoling bond - the sense of a value that is worth defending.

It is worth recalling that the issue of whether and what form of consolation is compatible with authentic religion has a basis in Wittgenstein's own writings. There are indications that he toyed with the idea of a state of not wanting or desiring any satisfaction. Thus the entry for 29.7.16 in the Notebooks considers the idea that not wanting is the only good. However, Wittgenstein seems not to have adopted such a standpoint and so avoided what I have termed the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis. Much later he explicitly, and without disparagement, recognised the consolation offered by Christianity:

The Christian religion is only for one who needs infinite help, therefore only for one who feels an infinite need. The whole planet cannot be in greater anguish than a single soul. The Christian faith...is the refuge in this ultimate anguish (CV 46).

Wittgenstein does see some forms of consolation as incompatible with more genuine forms of religion. Thus we find him saying: 'If you offer a sacrifice and are pleased with yourself about it, both you and your sacrifice will be cursed' (CV 26). This seems not to be a rejection of all consolatory reward through participation in a religious rite. Rather what it condemns is a form of self-congratulation. Elsewhere Wittgenstein says such participation

...aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather: it aims at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then feel satisfied (RFGB 64).

Although we have here a reference to satisfaction to be had from participation in religious rites, this is readily compatible with the Weak Anti-Consolation thesis. Wittgenstein can here be understood as excluding only consolation that is aimed for and being neutral about that which only occurs incidentally.

To summarise things thus far, it is clear that there is an antipathy towards consolation among Wittgensteinian philosophers, including Wittgenstein himself. Yet neither what I have called the Weak nor the Strong Anti-Consolation thesis seems to provide a clear route to clarifying just how we should express this antipathy. The Strong thesis fails because there are problems about its coherence and its faithfulness to the character of some forms of self-renouncing faith. The Weak thesis seems to be too unstructured. It excludes particular forms of consolation. But without a full listing as to which are the 'culprit' consolations it is hard to state the thesis in any simple and succinct way. Is there a way out of this dilemma?

The way out, I suggest, is to extrapolate from the implied distinction given by Wittgenstein in the last quotation above. The distinction is between consolation actively sought for and consolation which only arises incidently through living the religious life. On this basis we can state the Anti-Consolation thesis, without being sidetracked by the ambiguities in the literature and having to refer to a strong or weak version. The Anti-Consolation thesis so defined holds that belief in God as an end in itself cannot be held for any consolatory purposes. This latter definition allows that consolations may arise from such belief. What it excludes is the possibility that belief is motivated by the prospect of consolation.

Stated thus the Anti-Consolation thesis does have a prima facie credibility. A view of self-renunciation as not seeking consolations for the self can account for some cases where we might not want to say that a person who has made great sacrifices is self-renouncing. For example, we might picture a relief worker in the Third World seeking the improvement of the infrastructure and the economic development of a region. Such a person may have sacrificed very much in the way of material wealth. Yet he or she may also be quite forceful and arrogant and have a sense of his or her own importance, not



acknowledging the value or needs of others in contributing to the mission. The Anti-Consolation thesis presented above could exclude this from being deemed self-renouncing on the grounds that the individual concerned is seeking psychological benefits from the contribution he or she is making.

A further point to highlight is the way the Anti-Consolation thesis implies an over simple view of human nature which fails to give adequate due to the role of some forms of emotion in moral and religious life. The Anti-Consolation thesis implies an unproblematic split between a motivation which is orientated to receiving consolation and one that is not. But in the case of some forms of emotion which have a place in religious and moral life, this neat division is decidedly unsubtle' and unsustainable. The complex emotion of compassion is a case in point. Compassion typically involves an imaginative dwelling on the condition of another person, an identification with him or her and a regard for his or her good.

The value of compassion is stressed in many conceptions of self-renouncing faith. Yet compassion is not self-renouncing in a sense that implies any clear-cut distinction between directedness to consolation versus a neutral motivation for this. In some views of sainthood the issue of seeking consolation is simply irrelevant to the exercise of compassion by some individuals, simply in virtue of the kind of persons they are. In a later chapter the Bernanos case-study will provide one example of this. That chapter will also involve an illustration of the way another emotion, joy, can be sought by a religious believer without it being appropriate to classify this as seeking a consolation in lieu of believing in God as an end in itself.

None of this should be taken as implying that I think that the aspiration to remove all consolation from a person's adherence to religion has not been important in some traditions and sub-traditions within Christianity. Sutherland (GJB 160) quotes Iris Murdoch:

'as soon as any idea is a consolation the tendency to falsify it becomes strong: hence the traditional problem of preventing the idea of God from degenerating in the believer's mind'. The fear of this happening has been very genuine for many religious people. One is reminded of Luther's early spiritual struggle and discomfiture at the self-interested way Man turns to religion. There is also Edmund Gosse's haunting description of how his religious father went '...on his knees searching the corners of his conscience...and one by one every pleasure, every recreation, every trifle scraped out of the dust of past experience, was magnified into a huge offence' (Father and Son, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959,78). However, these forms of antipathy to consolation constitute only particular reactions to the fear that consolation may pollute faith. They should not be taken as providing any necessary conditions as to what belongs to an authentic religious faith.

#### **4. The Unreflectiveness-Thesis**

The term 'unreflective' is borrowed from D.Z. Phillips' essay 'My Neighbour and My Neighbours', (IE 229-250) which is an assessment of Winch's paper 'Who is my Neighbour' (TTMS 154- 166) on the subject of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The latter is a good place to start expounding what I mean by the Unreflectiveness-thesis.

Winch stresses the immediacy of the Samaritan's response. 'Nothing intervenes between the Samaritan taking in the situation and his compassionate reaction', in contrast to the Levite who 'went over and looked at him in a calculating way before passing by on the other side' (TTMS 156). The Samaritan's response involves no such intervening calculation. 'He responds to what he sees as the necessity generated by the presence of the injured man' (TTMS 157). On Winch's characterisation the response is immediate, non-calculating, not based on any intervening reflection and characterised by a necessity. Phillips agrees with all this and talks of the 'unreflective and immediate response' (IE 242).

He also implies there is a certain necessity to this response when he says it is not '...something we can adopt at will'.

There is a direct linkage between the idea that nothing intervenes and unreflectiveness. Unreflectiveness is directly reinforced by the idea that nothing intervenes. (Immediacy and necessity add two further dimensions to it - namely speed and some sort of compulsion - which do not directly concern us here. Though I shall say more about the necessity associated with authentic religious and moral reactions in section 7 below.)

The idea of unreflectiveness as something in which nothing intervenes between the person confronting a certain situation and reacting to it is rooted in what Wittgenstein says about primitive reactions such as towards other human beings: 'My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul (eine Einstellung zur Seele). I am not of the opinion that he has a soul' (PI, II, iv). Here Wittgenstein is contrasting attitude with opinion, and, by implication, with belief. Some things which are commonly taken to be beliefs, such as the belief that another human being is not an automaton, are really derivative of primitive unreflective reactions which are intimately bound up with the emergence of language. The term 'human being' is a case in point. Both Winch and Phillips have claimed that primitive reactions of this sort should be appreciated before we assume too readily that many religious concepts and reactions are to be interpreted as beliefs, or causally inspired by them. (See Peter Winch, 'Meaning and Religious Language' in ed. S.C. Brown, Reason and Religion, London & Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977 and D.Z. Phillips 'Primitive Reactions and the Reactions of Primitives: The 1983 Marett Lecture', Religious Studies 22, 1986).

It is important to realise that what is being claimed is not that authentic religious beliefs are primitive reactions. Rather, they are unreflective in some ways comparable to primitive reactions. Comparable in that nothing intervenes by way of reflection between the situation the believer finds himself in and his or her response. Consequently, religious

beliefs are not akin to opinions; they are nearer to being attitudes.

Despite these similarities there are important differences between the unreflectiveness associated with religious belief and that pertaining to primitive reactions. Firstly, the unreflectiveness of primitive reactions is often somehow derivative of the connection of such reactions with the biological nature of mankind. Thus Winch says:

In its primitive form action is quite unreflective. Human beings, and other animate creatures, naturally react in characteristic ways to objects in their environments. They salivate in the presence of food and eat it; this already effects a rudimentary classification which doesn't have to be based on any reflection between 'food' and 'not food' ('Introduction' to Simone Weil, Lectures on Philosophy, trans. H.S Price, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

Most of what goes on in what we call 'religious belief' or 'morality' does not have this rootedness in a biological context. As Phillips says in connection with the parable of the Good Samaritan and in criticism of Winch, this is not a natural but a supernatural reaction, whereby he means that it is exceptional.

Secondly, the Wittgensteinian position sees the unreflectiveness associated with religious belief as being distinct from that associated with primitive reactions in that it has to it a dimension in which the self is absent.

This latter point is so fundamental to the subject of our concern that some examples are called for in order to make clear how this is so. One good example is that of Winch's discussion of Father Sergius from Tolstoy's story. The essential point here is that when he succumbed to temptation Sergius' faith had become a matter of 'an object to be achieved'. It had become an avenue to his own satisfaction which, through reflection, can be weighed against another avenue to satisfaction, namely the seduction of the young girl who had been sent to him. Winch recounts how Tolstoy has Sergius ask the question : 'What does it

matter?'. This question is inviting '...a judgement explaining why religious purity is more important than the satisfaction of lust...' (EA 189). With the asking of this question the unreflectiveness has left Sergius' faith. And with its passing, self has crept in. Reflectiveness is self-affirming. It is something that seeks out and is orientated to the self's consolations.

D.Z Phillips provides an example of authentic faith involving unreflectiveness linked to non-articulation in his discussion of prayers of confession in The Concept of Prayer (CP 66-72). He interprets prayers of confession in terms of a form of contemplation leading to self-knowledge. He explicitly distinguishes this from another form of confession which arrives at self-knowledge through a process of articulation. In Faulkner's novel Requiem for a Nun Temple Stevens, by telling her story, begins to see an intelligible order in the events of her past. She '...begins to see the bearing which one thing has on another; her life begins to take a recognizable form' (CP 66). All this requires putting her story in an '...articulate form'. Phillips insists that this latter phenomenon is not what we find in the case of religious believers. He says,

If it were, reference to God would be superfluous. Temple is able to work out her salvation for herself. The believer finds the meaning of life in the worship of God.

He does not, indeed, cannot, work it out for himself (CP 66).

How are we to understand this?

Phillips is contrasting the self-affirming dimension to articulate confession from what he sees as a self-renouncing character of religious confession 'to' God. He stresses how Temple Stevens finds her own salvation through achieving a consoling sense of order in her life. She avoids despair by her own resources. But prayer to God is not like that. It does involve self-knowledge. But it is a very different form of such knowledge. It is knowledge of one's 'state of soul...the kind of person one is' (CP 67). Such knowledge of one's sinfulness brings a realisation that one cannot change what one is. In fact he even suggests

that the ultimate form of such realization is that: '...in the ego there is nothing whatever...which external circumstances could not do away with' (CP 70). The contrast here is with the self-reliant and self-affirming character of Temple Stevens' confession and the self-exposure to nothingness that accompanies the religious confession. The sense of such an exposure is implied to be something that is unreflective and immediate.

A final illustration of the way unreflectiveness is to be found in the Wittgensteinian position's comparison of religious belief to regulation by a picture. This is an idea that derives from Wittgenstein's 'Lecture on Religious Belief'. In Wittgenstein himself there is a strong emphasis on the self's subjugation to the religious picture - the forgoing of pleasures and the taking of risks on account of it. Phillips (FPE 116) makes more direct the way unreflectiveness and the self-renouncing dimension to the idea of religious belief as akin to a picture coalesce. He gives an example in which the religious picture of the Last Judgement loses its hold and becomes superstitious because it is held as a literal picture. Phillips talks of the fault of the believer. This fault seems to consist of the believer seeking the consolation of a picture promising continued survival after death. This is what prevents it being a case of authentic faith - the focus is on the self's desire for comfort. The belief is held 'self-assertively' (FPE 262) and 'fostered by the natural desire to see loved ones again, and to make amends for wrongs committed' (FPE 262). All this is fuelled by reflective infatuation with the self's own advantage.

One line of thought that the Wittgensteinian position uses to support the idea of the unreflective character of religious belief is that centred on the distinction between belief in and belief about. Thus Phillips refers to the request that a believer give an account of what he is doing when he prays (CP 2). Phillips says that in such a context the believer is lost - he is being asked to give a non-religious account of a religious activity. This is really, he claims, a matter of providing a pseudo-epistemological theory to give religion respectability

in other spheres of life. The unreflective character of religious belief in its natural context is supposed to be distorted by this kind of intervention which fails to take account of the nature of the religious activity itself.

The Wittgensteinian position seeks to emphasise the Unreflectiveness-thesis through its use of perceptual rather than deliberative analogies. Religious belief is said to be akin to a form of seeing. It is worth pointing out that the idea of a picture, as it occurs in many forms in the practice of religion, is not straightforwardly visual and unconnected to reflective analysis. A picture such as Paul Gauguin's 'Where do we come from, what are we, where are we going?' has the effect of drawing us in to seek out and articulate our response to it. Grunwald's stark picture of the Crucifixion with its image of Christ as physically deformed in suffering gains part of its impact through the way it stands out in contrast from the tradition of the serene and harmonious depiction of the suffering Christ. It is a picture that forces many believers to reflect on the adequacy of their own mental picture of the event, a process that has elements of articulating differences and being explicit about the nature of how and what forms of contrast exist.

Does the fact of being an attitude or a perspective really entail a complete disconnection from processes of articulation and reflection? I think that a more credible picture is one in which having attitudes and perspectives on matters is often sustained and transformed by articulation of beliefs. These are not two sorts of phenomena wholly insulated from each other but often part of a wider process in an individual's orientation to the world. A process where there is an interconnection between them. And, importantly, none of this need necessarily affect the self-renouncing character of one's commitments. Indeed it can contribute to it - something which we shall see illustrated in the later case study on Mauriac.

To summarise, the Wittgensteinian position sees reflectiveness and articulation as self-affirming because it involves seeking a sense of psychological consolation or solace from such activity. This latter sentence enshrines the essence and provides the definition of what I term the Unreflectiveness-thesis. The unreflective nature of such reactions is required in order for the self to be most truly absent. The implication is that if there was any reflection involved, then that would be an avenue for the self to intrude. Authentic religious reactions are required to have an automaticity so as to truly guarantee the absence of the self, to prevent the self impinging and impressing its character on actions.

One interesting way of understanding the underlying paradigm to this thesis is to be found in John Canfield's attempt to draw comparisons between Wittgenstein and Zen Buddhism. Canfield believes that Wittgenstein has language and understanding bound together in a 'practice'. Such a practice is said to overlap with the Zen idea of 'just doing' something, that is, 'doing something with a mind free of ideas or concepts' (WAZ 383). The interesting point Canfield makes about such unreflective action is its absence of self. He illustrates this with reference to a Taoist passage from Chuang Tzu (which apparently is meant to illustrate the Zen ideal also). A man crossing a river by raft is hit by a drifting, empty boat. The man pays no heed. Later, when hit by another boat carrying people, he shouts and curses.

Earlier he faced emptiness, now he faces occupancy. If a man should succeed in making empty, and in that way wander through the world, then who could do him harm.

The idea is meant to illustrate the unreflective 'just doing' of Zen as involving an emptiness devoid of self. Occupancy by reflection (and, in the Chuang Tzu quote, emotion) indicates a form of self-affirmation. I think that the paradigm which underlies the Unreflectiveness-thesis is something akin to this Zen/Taoist one.



There is a possible objection to the idea that the Wittgensteinian position involves an Unreflectiveness-thesis. The objection is that there seems to be something akin to a process of reasoning highlighted by several Wittgensteinian philosophers. Dilman's essay on John Wisdom (SILAR 85-108) is actually entitled 'Reason and Religion' and is an attempt to show that there is a process of reasoning not tied to justification, as is that outlined by Wisdom in his essay 'Gods', but yet not a matter of whim or randomness. The form of reasoning Dilman highlights is like Wisdom's in that '...it changes one's apprehension...by making and severing connections' (SILAR 103) but different in that '...it brings about in the reasoner a transition to certain values which engage with religious belief that have no more than a merely verbal reality for him...it helps him find ...their sense - the sense of beliefs which constitute the framework of a particular perspective on life' (SILAR 103).

In reply to this objection, the point is that such a 'reasoning' is what brings about a transition to religious belief for some individuals. It is not, for the Wittgensteinian position, illustrative of the character of the believer's response once he or she had attained an authentic and self-renouncing faith. Similarly, D.Z. Phillips discusses a comparable process of reasoning and describes it as a '...kind of persuasion...a form of imaginative elucidation, something which will bring about the dawning of an aspect not previously appreciated' (FAF 89). Again, in Phillips, the context is one in which this process of reasoning operates to bring a person into a religious orientation and is not meant to illustrate the character of that orientation once arrived at.

Authentic religious belief, being unreflective, is not in principle subject to justification. Indeed, since the provision of a justification would seem to require reflection and articulation in some way, the idea of a justification is something self-affirming. It should be noted, however, that the Unreflectiveness-thesis is not simply an 'anti-

justification-thesis'. It is far broader than that. Though it entails that justification is self-affirming, it seems to extend that to all reflective processes.

A consequence of the Unreflectiveness-thesis as outlined in this section is a certain form of unquestionability. For what is held in a way immune to reflective articulation cannot be subject to questioning without distorting the nature of the self's attachment to those deep convictions.

This immediately implies that the unreflective character of religious and other deep commitments is not subject to evaluation. Does not unquestionability entail a blind, uncritical imprisonment in one's deep belief and values?

Dilman has tried to deny this by seeking to stress the difference between unquestionability and non-assessibility. In a discussion of the idea of evaluation with respect to one's values he talks of 'self-criticism' and says:

A person who is self-critical has his eyes opened to the difficulties...in keeping faith with what one believes in. This does not mean necessarily that he can imagine and formulate objections to taking the various alternatives that present themselves to him or articulate their significance. There is a perfectly good sense in which....he may recognize what is objectionable, be able to anticipate his objections and so avoid the snares of temptation. Yet he may not be able to represent these to himself in advance...(FATM 134).

Being able to attain self-criticism and an evaluatory stance with respect to one's values does not require articulation, at least not of the kind possessed by a philosopher. A simple, inarticulate person can still evaluate his values in the sense that

...a man ...can be thoughtful and critical...although he is not a thinker. His thoughtfulness...is manifest in his life and actions...(A)lthough he is not a thinker...yet he may be receptive, open and even vulnerable to the way life tests and

tries his values. Such a man does not take his values for granted and is responsible for his moral convictions; they are not just something given, part of his childhood cargo...His love or regard for them has been tried, and so he has been tried. We could say that his love has been transformed from a passive habit to an active attitude of will (FATM 135-6).

Against Dilman it can be affirmed that making a man's life the testing point is hardly tenable. For a particular man may just by chance have had an easy life, a life untroubled by temptations or tribulations. This would be, ironically, a way in which the authenticity of a person's religious belief is subject to 'luck' in a way Bernard Williams has claimed morality often is. I think the Wittgensteinian position clearly, if unwittingly, leads in this direction. It implies a passivity of the self: the self is subsumed by a certain perspective on life which determines how the self sees everything. I believe that this is what Jurgen Habermas means when he claims that Wittgenstein himself practices '...the relentless expulsion of reflection in the name of understanding...to leave no middle ground between the coercion of deductive representation and the pathos of unmediated intuition' (On the Logic of the Social Sciences, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson and Jerry A. Stark, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988, 122). The way this leads to the passivity of the self is examined in more detail in the section of this chapter dealing with the Passivity-Implication.

## **5. The Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence Thesis**

Rush Rhees draws attention to the logical character of belief in God when he says

God's existence is not a statement of fact...It is a confession - or expression - of faith. That is recognised in some ways when people say ...that to doubt God's existence is a sin... (WA 132-33).

A clearer understanding of how doubt is to be understood as sin is found in Winch's

discussion of Tolstoy's Father Sergius.

Winch claims that at the time of succumbing to temptation Sergius' faith had become a matter of 'an object to be achieved' (EA 189). When religious belief is a matter of something to be achieved Winch says that the 'Glauconian question' arises. This is the question raised in expectation of an answer as to why the religious life is worthwhile. This question is inviting '...a judgement explaining why religious purity is more important than the satisfaction of lust...' (EA 189). In asking this question Sergius '...contemplated the religious life as an object and asked what there was about it that made it worth while' (EA 190). What he found was admiration and applause. Winch insists

...the 'religious feeling' and the 'desire for pre-eminence', of which Tolstoy speaks, must not be regarded as two quite distinct motives which are contingently intermingled. It is essential to understanding the story and to the philosophical point which I want to make to see that the one is a corrupt form of the other (EA 187-8).

Sergius, in looking at religious belief as an object to be achieved, saw in it an avenue for admiration and began to value it 'as admiration'. This gave Sergius' faith the character of a means to an end, namely self-fulfilment. Appreciating this enables us to see just why Winch holds that Sergius' doubt and his succumbing to temptation were different aspects of the same thing. Sergius was said to think of them as 'two foes, but in reality they were one and the same' (EA 188). 'As soon as doubt was gone so was the lustful desire' (EA 188). Doubt is a form of reflection which is the expression of concern for self.

The Sergius example is also discussed by Dilman. Dilman says:

God does not reveal Himself to one who is immersed in the life of the senses. A believer who gave in to the claims of...(a life of the senses) would inevitably start to doubt Him. Thus Tolstoy describes the claims of the flesh on Sergius' soul and

the doubts that beset him when he gives in to them as one and the same (SILAR 114).

Dilman defines a 'life of the senses' as a life in which '...pleasure, gratification and self-aggrandizement are given pride of place' (PPL 45), a life revolving around '...the satisfaction of sensual pleasures, bodily appetites and their derivatives - the desire for riches, power and fame....where concerns for these pleasures and satisfactions overshadows all other concerns' (SILAR 113). Dilman is claiming that there is a connection between giving in to the claims of the flesh and thus living immersed in the life of the senses, and religious doubt. Why should he think this? After all, traditionally it has been generally held that, though succumbing to the sins of the flesh is a matter of turning away from God, it is not necessarily a matter of doubt.

Dilman's reasoning is as follows. If the claims of the flesh take ...root in (a person's) soul he can no longer look at things and respond to them from the perspective of the love of God. This antithesis is bound up with what it means to believe in a transcendent God: you cannot explain what kind of God Christians believe in without bringing it in...' (SILAR 114).

For Dilman, knowledge of spiritual matters '...constitutes wisdom, a wisdom inseparable from virtue' (SILAR 114). Without that wisdom, doubt is a necessary consequence. Doubt is a matter of not looking at things from the perspective of the love of God. Doubt arises when things are looked at from the perspective of self.

The idea that religious belief involves a wisdom which is a virtue is reflected in Phillips' work. For example, he alludes to a man who sees that no justification can be given as why things happened to him in just the way they did, whose perspective on things is such that the givenness of his life is seen as an act of grace. Such a person possesses a particular kind of knowledge (RST 83). It is, of course, a knowledge that belongs to the context of

faith and not that of proof (RWE 180).

A philosopher who has highlighted a connection between some forms of doubt and sin (but is careful enough not to universalise his thesis) is Stewart Sutherland. Sutherland in his study of some forms of atheism, Atheism and the Rejection of God, highlights a connection between atheism and lack of self-renunciation that is derived from Weil. The form of atheism Sutherland is here dealing with is one of rebellion. He points out that for Weil such rebellion is inevitably a means of giving oneself an identity. For her such a creation of a self-image is incompatible with self-renunciation.

What Simone Weil means by the 'acceptance' of...affliction...is 'attention'. Attention which is complete and absolute in the form of love of one's neighbour. Attention as such is a form of self-emptying: it is contemplation and absorption into what is other than oneself (ARG 67).

He quotes Weil's claim that those who rebel in the presence of affliction would like to be something and says

To want to be something is in the end the basic form of self-assertion. When self comes into the picture...one no longer attends to the affliction (ARG 67).

Sutherland thus understands Weil's position to be that 'acceptance is nothing else than the quality of attention' (ARG 67), and that rebellion is a form of assertion of the self.

We can now provide a statement of the Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis. Religious belief is an unreflective view of the world because reflection involves consolation for the self, as discussed in the section of the Unreflectiveness-thesis. Doubt involves a form of reflection; it therefore entails self-affirmation. Thus doubt and succumbing to temptation are the 'same foe'. Belief is the converse; it is virtuous because in its unreflectiveness it constitutes an exclusion of the self and its claims.

As a final point of clarification it is useful to distinguish the above thesis from that of other schools in philosophical theology which point to connections between doubt and sin. For example, Robert Merrihew Adams argues that doubt is a sin because it derives from a lust for control of our lives (The Virtue of Faith, New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 16-23). Similarly, George Mavrodes, in his examination of Reformed Epistemology on this issue, highlights ways in which doubt and unbelief can be seen as instances of sin ('Jerusalem and Athens Revisited' in Faith and Rationality, eds. A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff, Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1983, 198). But the Wittgensteinian position is distinct from both these in that it implies an equivalence between doubt and sin. Doubt and sin are the same foe.

## **6. The Perspective-Thesis**

The Unreflectiveness-thesis is a negative thesis in the sense that it tells us what authentic religious belief is not, rather than what it is. The Perspective-thesis concerns the nature of that unreflectiveness: it portrays it as a perspective on the whole of life.

It is worth saying something about the implications this has for the traditional view of belief in God as a matter of belief in some way comparable to belief that a being exists. The Wittgensteinian position holds that belief in God is not to be understood as akin to the concept of belief used with respect to empirical entities. D.Z Phillips makes this point very clearly in the following quotation which employs examples from Wittgenstein (LRB 59-60):

If I say that something exists, it makes sense to think of that something ceasing to exist. But religious believers do not want to say that God might cease to exist. This is not because, as a matter of fact, they think God will exist for ever, but because it is meaningless to speak of God ceasing to exist. Again, we cannot ask of God the kinds of questions we ask of things which come to be and pass away, 'What brought

him into existence?' 'When will he cease to exist?' 'He was existing yesterday, how about today?'...(RBLG 127)

Coughlan, no doubt conscious of the above types of disparity between language involving facts and language about God, says:

Religious beliefs are not beliefs about statements in the sense of descriptions of reality, whether natural or supernatural...(B)elief in the existence of God is not belief in yet another fact...is not commitment to the truth of a statement of fact which might be theory-laden...Wittgenstein makes it clear that he takes religious beliefs to be fundamental determinants of the believer's way of seeing the world. Religious beliefs are not beliefs about facts which are coloured by some background theory; they are the background which colours the believer's view of the facts, they regulate for everything in a man's life...(WPRB 238).

The idea of religious belief as a determinant of the believer's way of seeing things I take to be equivalent to the idea that religious belief is a perspective on things. The term 'perspective' is widely used in this connection. Thus Phillips portrays faith as a certain sort of perspective on life. The term 'perspective' is used in, for example, (FA 11; RWE 167; FAF 115 ff.). Winch also uses the actual term (EA 178, 179, 190), as does Dilman (SILAR 214) and Tilghman (POR 214). Other visual terms are also used by Wittgensteinians, such as 'seeing' (e.g. 'seeing grace in all things', RST 104) or 'way of looking' (e.g. FPE 209). Sometimes the term 'attitude' is used (e.g. FPE 209; also Winch's elucidation of Wittgenstein's idea of the ethical will as an 'attitude to the world' in Winch, EA 118). In my account of the Wittgensteinian position I shall use the one term 'perspective'.

It is worth noting that the idea of a perspective is a methodological device in the context of a descriptive account of religious belief. Its purpose is to enable us to be a little clearer as to the nature of religious belief. It is no part of the Wittgensteinian position's



claim that believers have a perspective in the way they have a heart, a liver or a brain. The issue is not one about the relative merits of an existential claim but one that relates to the adequacy of the idea of a perspective to do justice to the character of religious belief as we find it.

The Perspective-thesis portrays the character of religious belief as something all-encompassing and directed to an awareness of a connectedness and wholeness in the phenomena encountered in life. Coughlan says that religious belief is the background which colours the believer's view of (or perspective on) the facts (WPRB 238). By this he means all facts. Phillips talks of seeing '... (people and things) with the whole of existence as their background; to see them sub specie aeternitatis' (RST 129). This idea of seeing the world as a whole comes from Wittgenstein. In Wittgenstein's Notebooks the entry for 7.10.16 includes the claim that 'the good life is the world seen sub specie aeternitatis'. Whereas the usual way of seeing things is from the midst of them, the view sub specie aeternitatis is from outside. Things are seen with the whole world as their background. In Tractatus 6.45 it is said

To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole - a limited whole.

Feeling the world as a limited whole - it is this that is mystical.

This idea of seeing the whole is linked in Wittgenstein to the idea of independence from the world.

Let us now examine the idea of independence from the world. In the Notebooks the entry for 13.8.16 Wittgenstein discusses the possibility of being happy despite the misery of this world. 'The only life that is happy is the life that can renounce the amenities of the world. To it the amenities of the world are so many graces of fate'. There is also the notion of an independence from the vicissitudes of the world in the 'Lecture on Ethics'. This is expressed in the idea of absolute safety: 'I am safe, nothing can injure me whatever

happens’.

The 11.6.16 entry in the Notebooks has the actual phrase ‘independent of the world’:

I cannot bend the happenings of the world to my will: I am completely powerless.

I can only make myself independent of the world, and so in a certain sense master it, by renouncing any influence on happenings.

It is significant that Wittgenstein refers here to a certain form of mastery over the world. I shall return to this point later. First I shall emphasise the link between the view sub specie aeternitatis and the idea of independence of the world.

How is the idea of independence from the world linked to the idea of seeing the world as a whole, the view sub specie aeternitatis ? The following comments enable us to see one way in which these notions are linked.

The context of Tractatus 6.45 is that of the problem of life. This is the problem of ‘the sense of the world’ (TLP 6.41), the world in which the subject is completely powerless (NB 11.6.16) and, in no causal sense, able to be independent of fate, to determine happenings. The solution to that problem is seen ‘... in the vanishing of the problem’ (TLP 6.521). The implication of Tractatus 6.522 is that it is ‘the mystical’ which secures the vanishing of the problem. And, as we have already noted, Tractatus 6.45 equates the mystical with ‘feeling the world as a limited whole’ and with, in turn, the ability to view the world sub specie aeterni. The difference this form of viewing makes is to enable the subject to live in the present. For ‘...the man...fulfilling the purpose of existence...no longer needs to have any purpose except to live’ (NB 6.7.16). This is what it means to be ‘...living in eternity and not in time’ (NB 6.7.16). Such a way of living enables the self to be independent of fate, to have no fear, even in the face of death (NB 8.7.16).

There is a case for holding that independence of the world attained through the view sub specie aeternitatis involves one form of selflessness. This point is well made by Tilghman in his discussion of Wittgenstein's views. He says '...one becomes independent of...(the world)...by accepting the world as it is...' (WEA 74). 'The self represents the world as seen from a particular point of view' (WEA 60). Therefore the view sub specie aeternitatis involves seeing without the intrusive influence of self. It is a seeing from the standpoint of eternity and not from one viewpoint in the world. However, the fact that it involves a form of selflessness does not mean we can equate it with all forms of self-renunciation found in religious life.

Is the idea of independence of the world necessarily a self-renouncing religious idea? There is no reason to deny that it is so long as we recognise that it involves a very different sense of self-renunciation from that associated with many Christian traditions. This will become clearer after we have considered the case-studies in Chapter 2-4. For the moment we can note that Monk talks of Wittgenstein's attempt to distance himself from his surroundings, including his fellow men. He quotes from a passage where Wittgenstein writes: 'Don't be dependent on the external world and then you have no fear of what happens in it...It is x times easier to be independent of things than to be independent of people. But one must be capable of that as well' (LWDG 116-7). This is evidence that independence of the world in Wittgenstein is a form of stoical self-concern with selflessness that is distinct from the identification with others that characterises many forms of religious self-renunciation.

The Wittgensteinian position seems to involve an uncritical application of Wittgenstein's idea of a view sub specie aeternitatis within a descriptive account of religious belief. There is a danger that this distorts many forms of self-renouncing faith by coming too close to conflating it with independence of the world - a point that will be illustrated

in later case-studies. For the moment I shall now seek to give some examples of the way the idea of independence of the world is linked to self-renunciation in the Wittgensteinian position.

D.Z. Phillips' use of the perspective sub specie aeternitatis is imbued with reflections of Wittgenstein's idea of independence of the world. Phillips talks of 'seeing grace in all things' (RST 106) which he qualifies as an '...acceptance of the whole in which the self withdraws and all things are seen as a gift' (RST 104). This enables a way of looking

...at people and things in a way which includes the light and the dark...to see them with the whole of existence as their background; to see them sub specie aeternitatis (RST 126).

Such a perspective provides, so Phillips claims, a framework within which the believer meets fortune, misfortune and the evil in life. It frames and determines the way the believer sees the world so that the saint and the atheist can be said to see different worlds. Such a 'seeing' involves no desire for an explanation in the face of pointless evil. It is said that '...this is what Simone Weil means by love of the beauty of the world'. This love encompasses both the beauty and the ugliness. The attitude of one who so loves '...is not determined by looking at things from the midst of them...(his/her)...attitude is other than the world's way of looking at things. His world is a different world from that of the man who sees objects from the midst of them' (FPE 54-55). The implication here is that the believer is freed from the constraints of a world in opposition to his or her aspirations. There is a release from dependence on everything turning out for the better.

It is important that we recall the context of this independence and how it fits into Phillips' wider account. Phillips thinks that a religion which tries to explain suffering is self-orientated and unauthentic. In contrast, he claims authentic faith is self-renouncing and involves living the acknowledgement that compensations for pointless suffering will never

come. It involves accepting that death will not provide them. It involves accepting that '...in the ego there is nothing whatever, no psychological element, which external circumstances could not do away with' (CP 70). In his book R.S. Thomas: Poet of the Hidden God Phillips claims self-renunciation involves '...the acceptance of all things as the will of God' (RST 87). It involves not '...seeking imaginary extra presences' but '...embracing the absences our questions come up against...(accepting)...the radical pointlessness in things' (RST 82). Self-renouncing faith does not go on '...hoping for a reciprocating touch' (RST 152) nor does it '...desire a quasi-present God, a God whose existence can be felt if not proved' (RST 153).

In short, what the view of the whole, the view sub specie aeternitatis is supposed to enable is a sense of release from the cravings for the self's continuance. It provides the means for the self to come to terms with its eventual dissolution into nothingness.

We find the same sort of modelling of self-renunciation on the idea of independence of the world in Dilman. He says that if the claims of the flesh take

...root in (a person's) soul he can no longer look at things and respond to them from the perspective of the love of God (SILAR 114).

Dilman portrays such a perspective as self-renouncing because it necessarily involves a diminishment of the sense of self and its replacement with a 'void' (SILAR 115). When there is this void, that is, this absence of the intrusive influence of the self, the world can be seen from the perspective of the love of God. Seeing from such a perspective is really a mode of seeing that is virtuous because it is unaffected by the self's natural orientation to the life of worldly pleasures. Action is no longer orientated towards the self's satisfaction and fulfilment. The person is now able '...to accept and love everything that happens' (SILAR 115) and by implication is independent of the world.

Such independence comes out clearly in his discussion of Socrates' view of the indestructibility of the soul. Dilman says this indestructibility can be understood as the possibility of a person finding eternal life. Such eternal life means being able '...to see things under the aspect of eternity, or sub specie aeternitatis' (SILAR 37). In turn, this involves detachment from time.

It is, of course, not easy to say what detachment from time amounts to, and what sort of temporal considerations a person becomes indifferent to...Certainly the desire for revenge, for consolation, for reward...are examples of what such a person becomes indifferent to (SILAR 37).

These examples are all, I suggest, examples of an independence from the vicissitudes of this world and the need for a consoling explanation of them. Such independence entails that a person is indifferent to his or her own future (SILAR 116). The self arrives at an invulnerable sense of significance despite the miseries of the world: 'Nothing that happens within the world...can destroy that significance; it is invulnerable to the course of events in time' (PPL 127).

Another example that Dilman gives is taken from Eugene O'Neill's play Long Day's Journey into Night. The character Edmund has a glimpse of what comes into view when a person detaches himself from all those relationships that are subject to the incursions of the world and becomes independent of them. Edmund recalls how he was on lookout in the crow's nest of a sailing ship.

Then the ecstatic moment of freedom came. The peace, the end of the quest, the last harbour, the joy of belonging to a fulfilment beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams!...Like the saint's vision of beatitude. Like the veil of things as they are seem drawn back by an unseen hand (PPL 126).

On another occasion

...I lost myself - actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm...I belonged, without past and future, within a peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God , if you want to put it that way (PPL 125-126).

Dilman agrees that this is what religious belief ultimately is. Man turns away from a daily life of 'survival of the self' (PPL 126). Man attains a perspective characterised by '...a sense of belonging timelessly ("without past or future") to something greater than his own life, and forming part of "peace and unity and a wild joy"...' (PPL 126). 'Only the beauty of each thing as it stands in the world as a whole matters; each thing takes its significance from that. Nothing that happens in the world, therefore, can destroy that significance: it is invulnerable to the course of events 'in time', absolutely secure' (PPL 127).

The term 'Perspective-thesis' refers to a thesis that has the four following facets. Firstly, that there is such a thing as a 'perspective', a way of seeing the whole of existence, a view sub specie aeternitatis in which the self is 'absent' and things and events are no longer judged in terms of what they contribute to the self's sense of security and wellbeing. Pointless evil can be endured because the self is independent of the world. Secondly, that this independence of the world is linked to the religious idea of self-renunciation. Thirdly, that the form of absence of self that accompanies such independence of the world and its vicissitudes is inherently self-renouncing. Fourthly, that it is intrinsic to, i.e. a necessary condition of self-renouncing religious and ethical orientations to the world.

## **7. The Passivity-Implication**

Having in the last section looked at the ultimate nature of the perspective on life held by the Wittgensteinian position to be the underlying logical character of belief in God, this

section will turn to examine an implication of that account. What I call the Passivity-implication concerns the way the believer is subsumed under the categories given by the perspective on life. How far and in what way is this implication of passivity and subsumption true to the character of the role in life of belief in God? This latter question is really only fully answerable after having considered the later case-studies in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The real concern of this section is to make clearer the form of passivity that is implied.

The basis of the Wittgensteinian position is the emphasis on the regulatory character of religious belief. This goes back to Wittgenstein's 'Lectures on Religious Belief'. The religious picture of the Last Judgement involves an 'unshakeable belief', a belief that '...will show, not by reasoning or appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in (the believer's) life' (LRB 54). There is a self-renouncing dimension to this. The believer's submission to the religious picture is such that it involves 'forgoing pleasures' (LRB 54) or taking risks that would never be taken for other beliefs that may even be '...far better established for him' (LRB 54). Religious belief as a picture is, for Wittgenstein, something the self subjects itself to.

The character and degree of this subjection is such that the belief determines the very nature of the believer's conceptual understanding of the world. To quote Phillips:

Religious language is not an interpretation of how things are, but determines how things are for the believer. The saint and atheist do not interpret the same world in different ways. They see different worlds (FPE 132).

This is an indication of the intensity of the restraint imposed upon the believer by the religious belief or picture. The believer's perspective on life is a seeing of the world, despite all the pain and evil in it, as a place of beauty. Phillips talks of the givenness of life. The individual is so used to viewing the world under the categories defined for it by the



perspective that the capacity to reflect is absent.

In the Wittgensteinian stress on the passivity of the self it is not clear whether there is any active role for a believer with regard to the issue of the intensity of his or her faith. The way that the religious perspective regulates so that we can refer to the consequent faith as 'self-renouncing' does not seem to be a consequence of any action by the believer. It seems to be more akin to a process of perspective-shift. So when Tolstoy's Father Sergius succumbs to temptation the Wittgensteinian position can explain what has happened as a transition from selflessness to self-orientation but cannot, it seems, account for Sergius' own part in this (EA 189; SILAR 114; DI 32). A perspective-shift seems to be something that the self undergoes rather than something it can be said to initiate, to intend or be responsible for. The Wittgensteinian position has it that moral responses are, in Phillips' words (following Winch in TTMS 147), 'unreflective reactions' that 'cannot be taken up and dropped at will' (MN 114). Similarly, Winch speaks, in connection with the Good Samaritan, of the '...purity of the compassion...a reaction...(such)...that nothing else was possible in the circumstances...' (TTMS 159). There is a form of necessity here.

This also comes out in the way that the Wittgensteinian position claims that the perspective determines even our inclinations.

Our emotions and inclinations can themselves be determined by our deep moral convictions, so that where we feel deeply about things our actions are subordinated to...and inspired by ideals which prompt us...to turn away from and put aside our appetitive inclinations ...(O)ur moral values play the role of 'reasons' in our lives; they give us a perspective on things...(PPL 42).

Dilman is here considering the Kantian division between reason and inclination. Moral beliefs (and I think he would also say religious ones) are held to play a role akin to that played by reason in the Kantian schema. In fact Dilman seems to go beyond Kant. For in

Kant reason is usually (though not exclusively so, it must be admitted) thought to be something that suppresses inclination. In contrast, Dilman's talk is of determining inclination. This presupposes a model of a self passive in respect to inclination in the way the Kantian model does not.

There are two lines of thought which the Wittgensteinian position implies requires a stress on passivity in order to do justice to self-renouncing orientations to the world.

The first line of thought concerns the way in which the Wittgensteinian position finds the model of the will as a force somehow at the command of the self to be self-affirming. Winch talks of the '...recognition that the appearance of power created by the existence of the will qua phenomenon is an illusion' (EA 118). Winch is pointing out the self-affirming dimension to the idea of will as, in the words of William Charlton, an 'executive capacity' to implement what our 'deliberative capacity' comes up with (Weakness of Will, Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, 177). Dilman seems to be in line with Winch when he insists that love, and I believe he would also say love of God, is an 'expression of will' but cannot be acquired at will (RPW 193). His emphasis, following Wittgenstein, is on the will as the attitude of the subject to the world and not a quasi-mechanical force (cf WOTS 178).

A second line of thought which encourages the Wittgensteinian position to promote the Passivity-implication is what amounts to a moral aversion to the idea of meaning as being sustained by factors inside the self. Meaning is possible not through some inner act or series of acts which the self can perform inwardly. Meaning is possible only within a system of social interaction with associated publically specifiable criteria. Anthony Kenny says: 'Unselfishness...is measured not by interior acts of renunciation but by willingness to put first the interests of other human beings in the public world' (The Metaphysics of Mind, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 96). For the Wittgensteinian position not merely the measurement but also the intelligibility of the concept depends on it having a context

within communally specifiable criteria as to what counts as an instantiation of it. This is not purely a matter deriving from what theory of meaning is most adequate. It also has a moral and self-renouncing dimension. Thus Shields says:

...Wittgenstein establishes an intimate connection between the violation of language and a distinctly moral failing, a pretence and perversity of the will. The limits of language mark the limits of our world, and through reflection on logical form we ought to recognize the inherent duplicity of our failure to acknowledge ourselves and our world as they really are (LSLW 114).

Shields insists that according to Wittgenstein

...the conditions of sense transcend the wills of individuals. They are thrust upon us mysteriously, allowing neither reason, protest, nor negotiation, and they require absolute acceptance if language is to make sense (LSLW 46).

It is arrogance and self-affirmation to believe the conditions of sense can be derived from the isolated, solipsistic self. In Theology After Wittgenstein Fergus Kerr writes: 'I discover myself, not in some pre-linguistic inner space of self-presence, but in the network of multifarious social and historical relationships in which I am willy-nilly involved' (TAW 69).

Kerr goes on to connect the idea of meaning as capable of being generated by the isolated subject with the post-Cartesian preoccupation with the individual subject of mental states and events. Against this 'egocentric predicament', Kerr claims Wittgenstein stresses that the given are not atomistic elements in a world of 'hard units, whether atoms or souls, each completely self-subsistent' (TAW 61). Rather, the given is '...the endless multiplicity of...social practices' (TAW 64). This picture takes us away from the '...metaphysical desire for secure foundations' (TAW 65) and the pride '...encouraged by the metaphysical tradition...to say that creatures like us, as images of God, are not naturally bound in time

and space...' (TAW 189).

To summarise, there are two separable background elements behind the Wittgensteinian position's Passivity-implication. Firstly, there is the recognition that the model of the will as an executive capacity at the command of an inner, all commanding self is also self-affirming. Secondly, there is the moral stress on the self-affirmation involved in the model of meaning as generated by the 'self-communing self' paradigm. Do these elements support the Passivity-implication directly?

I think the first element does not directly support the Passivity-implication, though it does reinforce the Perspective-thesis in that it tends to promote the idea that self-renouncing orientations to the world should somehow be logically akin to a subject having a perspective on things rather than commanding its own mental states. The second element seems more readily to lead to the Passivity-implication and its picture of the self as subsumed in certain conceptual categories.

The Passivity-implication arises in a viewpoint keen to eliminate the distorting influence in certain paradigms which contain an implicitly self-affirming picture and, consequently, are too insensitive for use in a descriptive account of self-renunciation. But we can now ask: Does this model take sufficiently seriously the reality of the self as conceived in some religious traditions ? Does it adequately account for the conceived unceasing incursions of the self ? Consider Tilghman's claim that 'the self represents the world as seen from a particular point of view' (WEA 60) and Winch's claim that '...the agent is this perspective' (EA 178). These claims imply that there is no reality to the self separable from the perspective itself. The 'defeat' of the self is here no defeat at all but a shift from one viewpoint to another, much like a cinematographic camera sliding down a rail. Self is merely a matter of what conceptual apprehension is taking place at a particular time and place.

## 8. The Acceptance-Thesis

The term 'acceptance' is one borrowed directly from D.Z. Phillips who describes authentic religious faith as '...the acceptance of all things as the will of God' (RST 82) and from Dilman who talks of the believer coming to 'accept and love everything that happens' (SILAR 115). This idea that the believer's stance towards the world is one of acceptance is integral to the Wittgensteinian position. It directly derives from the Anti-Consolation thesis, which 'precludes' holding belief motivated by the hope of consolation, and the Passivity-implication of the Perspective-thesis. We saw in the last section how the Passivity-implication assumes the believer's passive subsumption under the categories defined for it by the perspective which belief in God supposedly is.

Characterising the Acceptance-thesis as the passive acceptance of all things needs some qualification in order to avoid a charge of vagueness. Something needs to be said about just what sorts of things are to be accepted. The recurring examples from the literature are as follows:

- acceptance of the self's insufficiency and the fact that it is not the centre of everything;
- acceptance of pointless suffering;
- acceptance of psychological despondency or despair without hankering for its alleviation;
- acceptance of the finality of death;
- acceptance of things as they are and not seek to manipulate events.
- acceptance of this world as it is without seeking to explain it in terms of another, a supernatural realm (Anti-Justification thesis). This element of the Acceptance-thesis is discussed in section 9 of this chapter.

### i. Acceptance of the Non-Centrality of the Self

For the Wittgensteinian position, self-renouncing faith has no place for a self which is put at the centre of everything, around which all things are assumed to revolve. Thus Phillips says:

Belief in God...is that which is given by contemplation that the world is and that there are other human beings, through the renunciation of the self (CP 105).

The renunciation of self is a necessary precondition for contemplation that the world and other human beings exist. Dilman uses Simone Weil's idea of 'the void' to convey this idea (SILAR 23-4; 31; 115). For Phillips self-renouncing faith involves the ultimate realisation that there is '...in the ego...nothing whatever...which external circumstances could not do away with' (CP 70). He brings in Simone Weil's criticism of the type of faith which tacitly assumes we have claims everywhere:

When we have enjoyed something for a long time we think that it is ours and that we are entitled to expect fate to let us go on enjoying it. There is the right to a compensation to every effort whatever its nature, be it work, suffering or desire...Every time we give anything out we have an absolute need that at least the equivalent should come into us...We think we have a right to it. We think we have claims everywhere...In every claim...there is always the idea of an imaginary claim of the past on the future. That is the claim which we have to renounce (part of a lengthy quotation from Weil given in CP 69).

Phillips says that authentic faith recognises that '...nothing is ours by right, and that everything is the gift of grace' (RWE 54). The self is not the central pivot around which the world revolves but a dispensable element in a universe it has not the self-sufficiency to physically triumph over.

The emphasis on the non-centrality of the self is true to the spirit of Wittgenstein's thought. Significant is Wittgenstein's dismissal of the self-sufficiency that assumes that it alone can set the parameters of meaningful discourse. Thus he says that the claim 'I know' ...in its language-game is not presumptuous. There, it has no higher position than, simply, the human language-game. For there it has its restricted application.

But as soon as I say this sentence outside its context, it appears in a false light. For it is as if I wanted to insist that there are things I know. God himself can't say anything to me about them (OC #554).

There is a contingency about meaning that the self has not the power to command. Meaning is bestowed by the complex system of social practices and language-games that the individual finds in the world he or she inhabits.

The latter view reflects a contingency about meaning which sometimes ends up implying the contingency of the self. As noted in the last section, Fergus Kerr says : 'I discover myself, not in some pre-linguistic inner space of self-presence, but in the network of multifarious social and historical relationships in which I am willy-nilly involved' (TAW 69). Charles Taylor, when explicitly claiming to be borrowing a Wittgensteinian message, puts this slightly more strongly when he says: '...we are inducted into personhood by being initiated into a language' (SOS 35). Whereas Kerr talks of discovering the self, Taylor seems to be saying that the self is actually something to be understood as brought into being through initiation into language and linguistic practices. This is confirmed when he says:

A language only exists and is maintained within a language community...(Thus) one is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it (SOS 35).

This implies that the Wittgensteinian position ultimately has it that both the intelligibility of the concepts of selfhood and of being the particular self one is, are contingent on the

network of language-games one happens to be tied to. We have a distinct, but in some ways complementary sense of the self's contingency articulated by Phillips' exposition of Weil. Ultimately, both require acceptance that there is no secure and imperial self that is free of contingency. Shields says: '...we are ultimately dependent on preestablished conditions that lie forever beyond our personal control...' (LSLW 86).

## ii. Acceptance of Pointless Suffering

There is no need to say a great deal in this section since the issue of accepting pointless suffering has already been covered in the discussion of the Perspective-thesis; more will also be said on the issue of pointlessness in the section on the Anti-Justification thesis. The perspective sub specie aeternitatis provides a framework in which the pains and sufferings of this world can be endured without any desire for an explanation of them.

The Wittgensteinian position can be contrasted with the view of a philosopher such as John Hick. Phillips (FPE 127-8) discusses an example from Hick of a mother of a mentally handicapped child who says: 'Of one thing I am sure; my child's place in heaven is secure'. Phillips says there is nothing religious about this sort of response, which is really just a hankering for compensation for a present misfortune.

On Hick's account the mother would be saying, 'It is terrible for my child at the moment, but he is to be compensated later on' (FPE 127).

Hick has responded to Phillips on this point in his essay 'Religion as Fact-Asserting' (in God and the Universe of Faiths, London: Macmillan, 1973) claiming that the mother whom Phillips praises may simply not have spelled out in her own mind the implications of the Christian hope that 'all shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well'. Phillips' view of such a response is that it alters nothing - it is merely a re-affirmation of a religiosity rooted in 'external guarantees' and a 'train of compensations'.



In his reply to Swinburne and Hick in the 1977 Symposium (see ed. S.C. Brown, Reason and Religion, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1977) Phillips says that the force of a belief such as the latter '...depends on the absence of the higher level planning so essential to Swinburne's theodicy' (120). To understand what is meant the 'sheer pointlessness of those evils has to be admitted'.

I have some sympathy with Phillips' retort. There are certain sorts of religious response which are unrelatable to the attempt to provide an explanation of evil. For example, Phillips talks of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane coming to '...see his survival as a mere possibility subject to the will of God' (139). It would be a distortion of Jesus' position to say it was a sacrifice entered into in a rational way as part of some grand process of spiritual development. Phillips' example is also true to certain insights of Wittgenstein himself, who refused to worship a God viewed as directing a grand design in which evil has a place (see M.C. O'Drury 'Conversations with Wittgenstein' in ed. R. Rhees, Recollections of Wittgenstein, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, 107-8). This is, of course, also Ivan Karamazov's refusal to worship the sort of God whose grand plan includes the murder of children.

However, the case-studies in chapters 2-4 will show that the Wittgensteinian position does not grasp some religious reactions, reactions which are distorted if construed as a matter of acceptance of the form posited by the Acceptance-thesis.

### iii. Acceptance of the Finality of Death

Wittgenstein himself clearly found no place for the idea of a continuation of the self beyond death. In the Tractatus he says that

...this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. Or is some riddle solved by my surviving for ever? Is not this

eternal life as much a riddle as our present life? (TLP 6.4312).

Wittgenstein later attacked the intelligibility of the idea of surviving death as it is often conventionally expressed.

Philosophers who say: "after death a timeless state will begin"...and not notice that they have used the words "after" and "at" and "begins" in a temporal sense, and that temporality is embedded in their grammar (CV 22).

Many of the conceptual difficulties associated with the idea of a continuation of the self beyond death, including the intelligibility of the notion of disembodied existence, are dealt with in D.Z. Phillips' Death and Immortality. Phillips' distinctive contribution is to be found in the way that he, perhaps more than any other exponent of the Wittgensteinian position, has pointed out not merely conceptual problems but also objected to the self-orientated dimension supposedly inherent in the idea.

The essential point in Phillips' descriptive account of the concept of immortality is that it does not imply an extension of life. Immortality is not '...more life but this life seen under certain moral and religious modes of thought' (DI 49). It refers to a person's '...relation to the self-effacement and love of others involved in dying to the self' (DI 54). Dying to the self is what authentic faith is about (CP 70; RST 102).

What is the connection, in Phillips' thought, between authentic religious belief as involving dying to the self and the idea that death is the cessation of the self? The recognition of death as a termination of the self is said to be self-renouncing because it involves acceptance of the truth that there are never to be compensations for misfortunes suffered in this life. But if we think of surviving death, Phillips says '...the lesson religious believers see in death is lost, since death no longer reveals the fact that there is to be no compensation, but is seen as an additional fact for which compensation is sought' (DI 53).

It might be questioned why a cessationist view should be assumed to be automatically non-consolatory. In a passage from Derek Parfit we find, apparently, a different view:

After my death there will be no one living who will be me...Though there will later be many experiences, none of these experiences will be connected to my present experiences by chains of such direct connections as those involved in experience-memory, or in carrying out of an earlier intention (Reasons and Persons, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, 281).

Parfit stresses that he finds his view, a view which, superficially, does accept the termination of the self at death, actually '...liberating and consoling'.

Phillips could no doubt reply to this apparent counter-example. He might point out that it is really a case of someone who, faced with the self's termination, yet manages to find some solace in thinking that something of the self - although that something is much less that direct continuity of consciousness - will actually persist after physical death.

Although this stress on accepting the finality of death is true to some religious traditions, we shall see in the Bernanos case-study that it not applicable to all.

#### iv. Acceptance Without Seeking Manipulation

Authentic religion involves the acceptance of all things and is not conceived of by the self-renouncing believer as a means of manipulating outcomes.

One line of thought that illustrates this is Rush Rhees's dismissal of the attempt to understand the miraculous in terms of quasi-causal power. For this is in reality an attempt to utilise a metaphysically conceived God as a sort of mechanism to bring things about. Rhees says:

...a quantitative comparison between the physical effects of God's power and the

physical effects of anything else would be a pretty unholy sort of thing...(WA 113).

One aspect of this unholiness can be grasped by reference to what A.P. Shooman, a former student of R.W. Beardsmore, says about a causal explanation of miracles:

...To ask for a causal explanation of a miracle is to put oneself beyond the point where talk of the miraculous can mean anything; for asking what Christ does involves a failure to recognize who Christ is. The assumption that lies tacitly rooted in this way of talking is that the difference between, for example, myself and Jesus Christ is a matter of degree. Whereas I cannot raise the dead, He can. It becomes a question of who can do what. There is an unholiness in this way of talking (MRB 46).

The unholiness consists in elevating the self through clinging to the illusion that it is only a degree or so removed from God. The assumption here is that the logical status of God's power is merely a consequence of its physical effects in the world. But why should we think this ?

Let us look at D.Z. Phillips' use of this power-argument in his criticism of Geach (DI 21 ff.). He claims that to associate God with 'power' is to merely offer a worldly incentive to a person as to why he or she should believe in God. Such incentives can only, according to Phillips, result in a policy for self-security, ' a means to get what one wants in this dangerous world' (DI 29) and not a self-renouncing faith in God. The problem with Phillips' claim is its uncritical assumption that something is a worldly power merely because it competes with other worldly powers or aims at a victory which triumphs over other powers in this world. In his paper 'The Perfect and the Particular' (Inaugural Lecture, King's College London, June 1994), Paul Helm criticizes the assumption that something is a worldly victory by virtue of what it competes with or aspires to triumph over. He points out that what determines whether something is a worldly victory is the nature of that victory

itself.

Phillips seems to be led astray by assuming that things only logically compete when they are in the same logical category. Yet this is a questionable assumption which is criticized in Charles Taylor's essay 'Rationality' (in eds. M. Hollis and S. Lukes, Rationality, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982). Taylor shows how concepts belonging to another, incommensurable belief-system, which he assumes is the sort of contrast posited in Winch's famous essay 'Understanding a Primitive Society', can yet pose a logical threat so that we can intelligibly talk of 'valid transcultural judgements of superiority'. The difficulty in adopting Taylor's illustration here is that it is based ultimately on how '...theoretical cultures score successes which command the attention of atheoretical cultures' (104). In other words, Taylor only finally manages to show how worldly technological powers triumph over incommensurable non-technological ones. In contrast, what we are seeking is some purchase in the idea that non-worldly powers, though incommensurable with worldly ones, can yet be held to triumph over them.

Such an illustration is found in Weil:

The things of this world exist. Therefore I do not detach from them those of my faculties that are related to existence. But since the things of this world contain no good, I simply detach from them the faculty which is related to the good, that is to say, the faculty of love (quoted SW 200).

The contrast here is between the 'things of this world' and 'the good'. The 'things of this world' are in a different conceptual space from 'the good', as is shown by the sense in which the 'things of this world' can be said to have a relation to 'those of my faculties that are related to existence'. 'The good' has no such relation. Yet the concept of 'the good' is logically something which can affect assessment of the things of this world.

Thus the use of the idea of 'power' in connection with God, even when that is used in a way in which it is logically thought to compete with worldly power is not sufficient to make God logically into something comparable to a worldly power.

That the self-renouncing believer's faith involves an acceptance of things incompatible with using it to manipulate outcomes is argued by R.J. Ray, who is heavily influenced by Phillips. According to Ray, attempts to manipulate outcomes are self-affirming because they 'do not afford a sense of spiritual dependence on God...' ('Crossed Fingers and Praying Hands', Religious Studies 26, 1990, 482). Dependence is said to be a matter of trust. In contrast, outcome-influencing activities involve not trust in God but reliance on Him. Ray alludes to a distinction between reliance and trust deriving from Hertzberg

In relying on someone I as it were look down at him from above. I exercise my command of the world. I remain the judge of his actions. In trusting someone I look up from below. I learn from the other what the world is about...(Lars Hertzberg, 'On the Attitude of Trust', Inquiry 31, 1988, 315).

To try to influence outcomes through God is supposed to be a means of putting the self at the centre in providing for its need for security. This is very clearly put in the example discussed by Ray (479-482) which centres on a case where the belief is 'motivated by fear' (482).

An important example of acceptance as opposed to an attempt to manipulate events is found in the Wittgensteinian positions' interpretation of prayer. Petitionary prayer, in particular, might be thought of as a paradigm case of seeking to influence outcomes. The Wittgensteinian position opposes such an interpretation. Wittgenstein himself, in the Notebooks says: 'To pray is to think about the meaning of life' (NB 73). The most developed Wittgensteinian account of prayer is to be found in Phillips' The Concept of

Prayer. In that book he says that prayers of petition are best understood along the lines of his account of prayers of confession.

In prayers of confession and in prayers of petition, the believer is trying to find a meaning and a hope that will deliver him from the elements in his life which threaten to destroy it: in the first case, his guilt, in the second his desires (CP 121). The crux of his account relates to the way such prayers preserve the believer from despair (CP 67) and enable him or her to come to terms with their 'limitations as a person' (CP 67).

## **9. The Anti-Justification Thesis**

The Wittgensteinian position stresses that the self-renouncing believer accepts the world and the contingencies within it as they are. He or she does not seek to explain or relate occurrences in terms of another, a metaphysical realm. In what follows I shall intend the term 'metaphysical' to mean what is captured in the following quotation from Dilman:

...(I)f one turns the antithesis between what belongs to this world and what is supernatural into a contrast between what is here and what lies elsewhere, beneath, behind or beyond space, or into a contrast between what is now and what is to come later...then one will have made it into something with which it is impossible to have any relation that is not worldly (SILAR 116).

Whether there is any intelligible sense in which these terms can have a purchase is not relevant to our immediate interests. Nor is the issue whether logically there is more than one contrast being made in this latter quotation. In what follows, sometimes 'transcendence' and 'supernatural' will have a meaning different from that of 'metaphysical'.

The Wittgensteinian position affirms that conceiving of God as a supernatural Being necessarily involves self-orientation. Fundamentally it is derivative of the desire for consolation of some sort.

This consolation is sometimes conceived of as a sense of security. Sutherland provides an interpretation of 'transcendence' which is distinct from the traditional metaphysical understanding, but one linked to the notion of self-renunciation. He insists, following Bonhoeffer, that transcendence is not to be understood as an '...attempt to have security from something visible' (GJB 117). For that would not be a genuine experience of God but a '...partial extension of our world' (GJB 119). Rather, transcendence is the '...freedom from self...the accuracy of vision which one has of another being' (GJB 122). He illustrates this with reference to Weil's idea of 'loving attention'.

The idea of security also underlies one central argument given by Dilman for the incompatibility of self-renunciation with the supernatural. Dilman points to the consolation involved in relating events to a supernatural realm by reference to self-orientated desire for a sense of a bond or contact to something else. If God is conceived of as somehow metaphysically present when we act, His presence would be 'something we can have in view when acting...(and)...this would change the character of our actions, they would no longer involve self-renunciation' (SILAR 115). If God is construed as present then

...(e)ven a martyr going to his death is supported by the bond he feels unites him to God. He does not feel alone and abandoned. This is not to deny that his action may not be completely selfless and disinterested. It may be so, but it does not diminish his sense of self. It does not replace it with a void. Christ felt no such support when he was nailed to the cross...he did not know that God was with him (SILAR 115).

Something akin to this is found in Phillips' characterisation of authentic faith as not a seeking for a God '...whose existence can be felt...' (RST 153) or a 'reciprocating touch' (RST 152). As was noted in the discussion of the Anti-Consolation thesis, there are problems with construing self-renouncing faith as necessarily involving no sense of a bond to anything at all.



Phillips has an argument which holds that the idea of a metaphysical God issues from both a desire for security and an urge towards self-centredness. He says that to see God as metaphysical is to see Him as a controller and therefore to want to see events bestowed with reference to oneself as the reason for their occurrence. 'It is precisely because there is no reason why things should go as they do in life that there is the possibility of seeing all things as acts of grace, as things bestowed without reference to oneself as the reason for their occurrence' (RST 82). Phillips thinks that there is something necessarily self-renouncing about 'accepting the radical pointlessness in things' (RST 82).

We can question whether it is a necessary condition of not seeing self as the reason for the occurrence of things that one finds everything pointless. As an example let us consider Diogenes Allen's theodicy as presented in his paper 'Natural Evil and the Love of God'. He argues that suffering can lead us to transcend our egotism.

'(E)gotism is common. 'Why did this happen to me ? What did I ever do wrong ?' This is often said or felt with a sense of indignation, of outrage, of offence or self-pity... (But)...reflection can lead us to recognize more fully what we already know: we are material, and as a piece of matter we are vulnerable to injury, illness, and decay. To realize this is to realize our status, our place...(W)hen the flow of our self-regard is painfully interrupted, reflection may lead to a new awareness of our limitations, and it may lead to an act of acceptance of such limitations (eds. M.M. and R.M. Adams, The Problem of Evil, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, 193).

Allen rejects the position adopted by many philosophers, such as Hume, that regard evil as counter-evidence. Such a position precludes our seeing the religious lesson derived from suffering and merely reinforces our egocentricity. Now all this is something that Phillips is unlikely to quibble with. However, the significant point is that Allen does not couple this

link between suffering and a diminution of our self-regard with a further link to the recognition of pointlessness. And I think this is a reasonably tenable position because there simply is no such necessary linkage. Coming to see we are not at the centre of things is logically unconnected with any seeing of the nature of things as inherently pointless. Phillips is wrong to imply their conjunction.

The issue as to what it means to remove a sense of pointlessness in the face of suffering is not unambiguous. Phillips does not really touch on this, but it is a genuine concern. Some philosophers have assumed that here 'not being pointless' requires a wholesale account of how a God of love can have sufficient reasons for permitting evils [1]. However, this is not the only sense in which there is a justification in the sense of alleviating pointlessness in the face of evil. Another sense of justification does not seek any wholesale reconciliation between propositions pertaining to attributes of an 'idealised' deity and those relating to the facts of evil in the world. Rather, it seeks merely to assist in the practical task of confronting evil by seeking to impart a sense in which a person can view suffering. One example by a philosopher is to be found in Robert Merrihew Adams' paper 'Existence, Self-Interest and the Problem of Evil' (in his The Virtue of Faith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Broadly, his argument is that what we are attached to ourselves '...in a reasonable self-concern, is not just bare metaphysical identity, but also projects, friendships and...features of our personal history and character'. Many of the evils of the past have contributed to this sense of self-identity. He argues that Helen Keller would have lived a very different life had she not been born blind. When evils are viewed in relation to the goodness of life as a whole we cannot, out of reasonable self-interest, blame God. (Of course, Phillips could criticise Adams for the role self-interest plays in his argument. Against this, it could be claimed that the form of self-interest Adams highlights is very different from gluttonous self-orientation). The example discussed earlier from

Diogenes Allen represents a distinct development in this form of justification. It seeks to express and advocate a specifically Christian appreciation of suffering [2]. (Adams, in contrast, appeals to considerations which a luke-warm even non-religious person might recognise). How does Phillips stand with respect to this approach ?

As we have seen in the section on the Unreflectiveness-thesis, the Wittgensteinian position does not seem to have a place for even this latter form of justification in self-renouncing faith because even this form of explanation is consolatory and hence self-orientated.

None of what has been said above should give the impression that I am affirming that all self-renouncing conceptions involving the concept of transcendence involve a metaphysical conception of God. Rather, we must recognise that there are some which are distinctly not metaphysical. One example is to be found in Dilman's distinction between 'religious' and 'philosophical' transcendence as explicated in some parts of his paper 'Metaphysical and Religious Transcendence' (SILAR 109-115). Dilman says that when the Christian God is described as 'beyond the senses' it is the world of the senses that is in question. In Christianity the world of the senses does not mean '...those things we may be said to perceive with the senses' but '...the world in which we seek the satisfaction of sensual pleasures, bodily appetites ...the desire for riches, power and fame...the world where concern for these pleasures overshadows all other concerns' (113). I think that there are cases in which Dilman is right to say that turning to God, in terms of this contrast, is a matter of renouncing all these amenities. Another example of a non-metaphysical sense of transcendence is elucidated by David Cockburn ('The Supernatural', Religious Studies 28, 1992) and also by Peter Winch in his Simone Weil: The Just Balance. They show us a sense in which the language-game of the supernatural is based on reactions of wonder and awe. Such reactions involve recognition of a particular kind of virtue - they do not point

to another realm behind, above or in addition to this one. In Weil's terms, a 'supernatural virtue' involves a refrain from using powers that the self could, in worldly terms, legitimately utilize to secure its desired outcomes. Cockburn's examples include a man going to considerable length and great risk to help a stranger. Winch says of such cases:

Where...the agent expects some advantage from an action...we can point to the source of energy which makes possible the action...in other cases, we cannot (SW 208).

In these latter cases, where the self seeks no advantage, the source of the energy is supernatural, 'outside the world'. Cockburn says that here the thought is '...that this is impossible - that no explanation in earthly terms could show how such behaviour can occur' (290). We cannot account for why an agent did such-and-such a thing in terms of advantage or satisfaction. Here the role of the 'supernatural' (or the transcendent) is not to provide a justification but arises from a sense of wonder at cases where no such explanation is to be had.

It is worth emphasising that recognition of cases such as provided by Dilman, Cockburn and Winch in the last paragraph does not commit us to any views about how general they are in religious life. It is part of the purpose of this thesis to stress that there is not here any basis for isolating a necessary condition of self-renouncing faith.

## **10. Conclusions**

The theses of the Wittgensteinian position can be summarised as follows:

- (1) The Absoluteness-thesis holds that self-renouncing faith in God is an end in itself and not any further end;
- (2) The Anti-Consolation thesis holds that self-renouncing faith in God is not held for any consolatory benefits;

- (3) The Unreflectiveness-thesis holds that reflectiveness is consolatory and therefore self-orientated, not self-renouncing;
- (4) The Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis holds that doubt involves reflection and is an avenue for the self's intrusion - weighing alternative strategies for its own advantage. Doubt is therefore vice. Belief, the absence of doubt, is the virtuous state of absence of self;
- (5) The Perspective-thesis holds that belief in God is an unreflective view of the whole of life in which the self is independent of the world;
- (6) The Passivity-Implication implies that self-renouncing faith is something undergone rather than something the self is actively involved in commitment to;
- (7) The Acceptance-thesis stresses the stance of the self-renouncing believer as one of acceptance of all things. It particularly stresses (i) accepting the insufficiency and non-centrality of the self (ii) accepting pointless suffering (iii) accepting the finality of death and (iv) accepting things as they come without seeking to manipulate the course of events;
- (8) The Anti-Justification thesis stresses accepting this world as it stands, without reference to a metaphysical realm.

For the Wittgensteinian position the above theses are intrinsic to self-renouncing faith. This is perhaps more clearly seen if we sketch out how the theses are supposed to be interlinked to form a clear and distinct model:

There are no further ends to self-renouncing faith therefore:

- it is not held on the basis of receiving any consolation for the self, since consolations are a form of further end;
- it must involve the acceptance of all contingencies and not be susceptible to explanation or justification since these are consolatory;
- it must be unreflective and unquestionable since otherwise it would be subject to justification and hence consolation;

- it must be a matter of a form of viewing or seeing everything, a perspective on life seen sub specie aeternitatis.

Another way of presenting the above is as follows (Note: T/F = 'Therefore'):

1. There are no further ends to self-renouncing faith.
2. Consolation for the self is a further end.
- T/F 3. Self-renouncing faith is incompatible with being held on the basis of any consolation for the self.
- T/F 4. Self-renouncing faith must involve the acceptance of all things without any thought of or motivation towards consolation for the self.
5. Explanations and justifications are consolations.
- T/F 6. Self-renouncing faith is incompatible with explanations and justifications.
7. Reflectiveness is matter of articulation, questionability and explanatory clarity.
8. Reflectiveness is ultimately a matter of consolation for the self.
- T/F 9. Reflectiveness is incompatible with self-renouncing faith.
10. Doubt is a matter of reflectiveness.
- T/F 11. Doubt is totally incompatible with self-renouncing faith; it is sin.
12. Unreflective belief is a virtue.
13. The form of such unreflectiveness is that of a seeing, a perspective on all things in which they are seen sub specie aeternitatis.

## CHAPTER 2: FRANCOIS MAURIAC'S CONCEPT OF SELF-RENOUNCING FAITH

### 1. Introduction

Francois Mauriac (1885-1970) was a Nobel Prize winning French Catholic writer. Brought up in the provincial middle class of Bordeaux, this location and its surrounding countryside was to constitute an important setting for many of his works, including those discussed in this chapter.

Mauriac's childhood was dominated by the Jansenist character of his mother's religious devotion. His father had died when he was only twenty months old. Jenkins talks of the

...almost hallucinatory rigour of the pious observances at home, where the children went to sleep with their arms folded in the shape of a cross and where the sight or even the thought of one's own body could bring about eternal damnation (M 28).

The love of his mother provided a refuge for this fatherless boy but at the same time it was '...fused with the ideas of a hard duty sanctioned by the terrible authority of an inscrutable God' (M 28). Mauriac himself could talk of his childhood as lived around the sense of '...an eternity gambled at every moment' (Memoirs Interieurs 244).

With adolescence Mauriac began to be aware of patterns of behaviour and ideas beyond those of his insulated childhood. His discovery of the other inhabitants of Bordeaux was almost the discovery of another species. Accompanying this discovery was a conflict of passions.

...(P)assions of which the love of God and my mad desire for purity and inner perfection were not the least demanding; but also the pride and the shame I felt at being so different, so inexplicable; and the despairing timidity of the adolescent who

has the sense of his own almost infinite value but who discovers...that this value has no currency among men (quoted M 29).

Mauriac later came to see that, in order to come to terms with such tensions, in adolescence he had '...turned God into the accessory to my cowardice' (quoted M 31). In his first mature writings of the 1920s the theme of finding a sense of a genuine adherence to Catholicism, an adherence beyond making God into such an 'accessory', is sought for. His Jansenist view of fate and his consciousness of the influence of childhood, family and social class lead him to a view of self-renunciation very different from that of the Wittgensteinian position.

In an essay on Pascal in his book Mes Grands Hommes Mauriac writes:

What is most repugnant in the renunciation of some people is that they possess nothing to give up. Christianity attracts a host of people who believe that the Gospels authorize them to glory in their nothingness (MGH 2).

The implication behind this passage is that Mauriac does not hold that a condition of nothingness, or an absence of self, or even that recognizing one's nothingness, is the relevant consideration which makes for self-renunciation. The latter entails a nothingness in which the self is detached from need, inclinations and desires. Mauriac does not, as we shall see, think such a detachment is possible, given the depravity of human nature. His starting point is a Jansenist view of human nature as evil, weak and ultimately repulsive without the gift of divine grace.

For Mauriac self-renunciation has to do with a recognition of the radical insufficiency and incompleteness of the self. This is very different from being in or aspiring after a state of nothingness. The state of nothingness may well be a state of not requiring anything to fill the emptiness. To acknowledge one's state of being nothing does not imply acknowledging one's incompleteness, insufficiency and absolute need.



The recognition of the self's incompleteness and need, of its incapacity to provide of itself any remedy, is for Mauriac the fundamental issue. Too great an emphasis on the self's nothingness and its independence from the world ( as in the Perspective theses) can lead all too easily to a masking of the self's essential insufficiency.

I next want to highlight two issues. Firstly, how is this recognition of the self's insufficiency a matter of renouncing the self? In other words, how does the idea of renouncing, of giving up the self, have any application here? The second issue is: What is the nature of the radical insufficiency and incompleteness in human nature that Mauriac is concerned with?

In reply to the first question we find in Mauriac a view of the self as the construct of social forces and heredity. We find that the self's actions are largely the product of these forces. Characteristically the self is moulded by the institution of the family. (Mauriac himself saw his own sensitive nature as the consequence of his being brought up by his widowed mother). The self that is so moulded is generally a self that has been brought to ignore its own weaknesses and to cherish the security of family, profession or worldly success. For Mauriac such a self has to be renounced in order to attain a sense of insufficiency and incompleteness which alone makes relation to God possible. Such renunciation is not any kind of act. It is more a matter of a certain form of discernment. This discernment is one in which the self grasps its own lack of fullness.

The nature of this latter incompleteness brings us to the second question of the above questions. Further elaboration on this will be attempted in the section on 'Mauriac and the Anti-Consolation thesis'.

## 2. Mauriac and the Unreflectiveness-Thesis

As was outlined in Chapter 1 the Unreflectiveness-thesis is the claim that self-renouncing belief involves an unquestioning acceptance of beliefs and values in which there is no room for reflection and articulation. For reflection and articulation involve self-seeking motives entering. These distort the nature of the absolute commitment required in belief that is authentically self-renouncing. The supporting argument for this position has already been advanced in Chapter 1 and can be summarised as follows:

1. Self-renunciation involves an absence of self, a void.
2. Reflection about religious beliefs and values involves self-affirmation therefore
3. Reflection is incompatible with self-renouncing belief.

In Mauriac we find something very different from the model which underlies the above argument.

As we have noted at several points already, Mauriac's view of religious belief does not incorporate the first premise. For him, self-renunciation is not a matter of a 'void', so that in place of the self there is a centre-less point detached from the need to reflectively configure things for personal advantage. In contrast, he emphasises the ceaseless affirmation of the self which is characteristic of humanity since the Fall. The most that the self can do is to recognise its evil and insufficiency. It cannot quell it.

In most of the remainder of this section I want to consider premise 2. Does reflection about religious belief and values involve self-affirmation of some form? In Mauriac's novel Therese Desqueyroux we find two directions from which this premise is opposed. Firstly, we find Mauriac stressing that unreflectiveness can sometimes involve not adherence to the values of Christianity but a means of seeking to escape its claims and denying the truths about the self that it highlights. Secondly, he claims that reflectiveness is required in self-renouncing faith - it is the necessary prelude to the recognition of dependency, insufficiency

and the misery of Man without God.

After a childhood steeped in religion, Mauriac felt that he had to articulate his attachment to Christianity and make it something more than a manifestation of his adherence to social convention. In a sense, his writings are a part of that process. That process he saw as particularly necessary because of his view of the self as strongly conditioned by powerful forces of family, class and heredity. He belonged to the race of those who, born into Catholicism, realise they can never break away from it'. Struggling to articulate the nature of his attachment was seen as an important part of his faith.

The theme of Mauriac's novel Therese Desqueyroux is that of the struggle to free the self from its comfortable niche in a stable environment in which its essential dependency on God is never allowed to appear. The heroine of the novel is Therese, the middle class wife who poisons her husband and nearly kills him. Mauriac, the Catholic writer, seeks to show us how there is in her, despite her crime, a sincerity which in religious terms puts her far above her middle class accusers. Therese comes to articulate her understanding of how she had come into bondage from the forces of society, custom and heredity. She struggles to see how she had been forever playing a part. In renouncing the unreal self that had been thrust upon her she attains a capacity that could be receptive to the call of God.

Therese's sincerity can be described in Jenkin's phrase, as a matter of living 'against the world' (M 34). For Mauriac the self is so much a product of the world, and especially such institutions as the bourgeois family, that to live against the world is to live against the self.

One aspect of Therese's living 'against the world' is what Jenkins calls her '...basic integrity underlying her awareness that the mystery and value of life cannot be confined to (the) algebra of convention...' (TDJ 34). In the narrow society in which she lives, says Jenkins, '...psychological and moral life is fossilized into a rigorous code which, though it

derives from a particular tradition of family and ownership, is somewhat innocently assumed to have universal validity' (TDJ 42). Elsewhere, Jenkins says that the middle class Family in Mauriac '...with its tradition of ownership and its hereditary patterns of behaviour or disease taint human relationships within it, compel each new generation to submit, inflect the individual into conformity with the myth' (M 34). The family '...is the very form of the destiny of heredity and environment...' (M 34). Jenkins notes how, in Ecrits intimes, Mauriac attacks the fashionable, comfortable and elegant churches of these 'other christians':

that holy middle class, concerned to overlook no benefits...to take no unnecessary risk - even on the metaphysical plane; a cautious, circumspect, sensible species, with all their insurance policies in order for this world and for eternity.

Mauriac's disgust with the middle class mentality is a religious disgust. It is a disgust at a way of life that insulates Man from articulating and hence appreciating his essential dependence on God.

Therese is an unlikely heroine for a Catholic novelist to use as any sort of religious example. A poisoner, an attempted suicide, she ponders and claims to understand how desperate women can take their children with them. Taking no interest in her baby and often selfish and unkind to even her own elderly deaf aunt who loves her when all the others condemn her to isolation, Therese is in no way a saintly character.

Despite these things, Mauriac intends her to be one who shows us something of what is required to achieve an authentic religious life. In the foreword to the novel, Mauriac writes:

Many will feel surprise that I should have given life to a creature more odious than any character in my other books. Why, they will ask, have I never anything to say of those who ooze with virtue...? ...(B)ut I know the secrets of the hearts that are deep buried in, and mingled with, the filth of flesh... I could have wished, Therese,

that sorrow might have turned your heart to God, and have long desired to see you worthy of the name of Saint Locusta.

Locusta was a poisoner who became a great saint. Therese too exemplifies a capacity for sainthood that is more real than that of many conventional Christians who ooze with virtue. Mauriac also implies that the latter sort of believers will consider this sacrilege '...even though they may hold as an article of Faith the Fall and Ransom of our torn and twisted natures'.

Therese's sincerity consists in rejecting the self her environment has forged for her. Through reflecting on her predicament of blind conformity she strives for a self-knowledge and thus she exemplifies the first stages of what Margaret Mein claims Mauriac understood, namely man's power to recognise his own sin (MAJ 149). Margaret Mein says that Mauriac saw self-knowledge as 'la plus grande grace de toutes' and stands in opposition to ascribing any ultimate predestinarian element to Mauriac's Jansenism such that those predestined to evil are powerless to alter their fate (MAJ 149). Self-knowledge in Mauriac calls for a degree of sincerity such that the individual goes beyond self-complacency to face the unsightly aspects of its manifestations and to recognize its needs, needs which it is unable to answer.

It would appear that only those whose passionate natures have brought them to a full knowledge of sin, and so increased their indebtedness to God for ultimate forgiveness, have the intensity of fervour necessary for sainthood (MAJ 151). Therese has, in embryo, that intensity of fervour. She does not, in the confines of this novel, attain any such religious apprehension of indebtedness. Nevertheless, she is one of the 'types' that Mauriac can say of : '...c'était une ame excessive, incapable de demeurer a mi-cote' (quoted MAJ 151).

The references to Therese's sincerity in the novel are quite explicit. Jean Azevedo, the 'sage' who encourages her to look beyond the confines of her narrow world, says to her: 'In your every word I can detect a hunger and thirst after sincerity' (TD 60). Even though she does not take his advice that '...the only really important things was to seek God and strive after Him' (TD 56), she does exemplify his further saying that

All that matters is to hoist one's sails and make for the open sea, avoiding like the plague all those who persuade themselves that they have found what they sought, who cease to move forward, but build their little shelters and compose themselves to slumber...' (56)

In her self-analysis Therese comes to realize how her self has been marred by the conventional thought-forms of her upbringing. She sees that the people that form part of her society live only on the surface of things: 'one never sees into their hearts' (TD 56). She sees also that this superficiality also infects her:

Nothing came to my lips but the habitual phrases of which I made use in our family arguments. Just as in this part of the country all carriages are precisely "fitted to the road", or, in other words, just wide enough to ensure that the wheels will fit neatly into the ruts made by the passing waggons, so all my thoughts...had been equally "fitted to the road" which my father and parents-in-law had traced (56).

For the Unreflectiveness-thesis the process of reflection is supposed to 'invite in' the self. One way Mauriac implies that this does not necessarily happen is in his stress on the blamelessness of Therese and on her inability to find a motive for her act of poisoning. Jenkins says that when Therese, in her journey through the night, interrogates the 'fatality governing the world...she apprehends not sin but rather a suspension of judgement...a strange guarantee of ultimate blamelessness' (M 77). She is willing to accept moral responsibility, but the novel's portrayal of the ruling hand of destiny takes from her the

moral responsibility for the act.

To find a motive here would be to locate the act as a consequence of Therese's self-affirmation - it would then clearly be an instance of the self's intrusion. For Mauriac, the notion of purity of motive is an infatuation of the French middle class mentality. The idea of a motive consolidates middle class pride; it fosters the illusion that the self can control its motive and come to virtue by itself. Also, it becomes a means whereby the middle class individual can feel him or herself elevated as compared with those whose motive is clearly impure. But what Therese, and the reader, find is that there is no motive. Malice, greed, and all the conventional things that could figure as a motive are absent. Rather, what is found is the way certain modes of life, through their breeding of an unreflective stance to the world, constrict all possibility of a religious response. That is the nearest thing we get towards an explanation of why it happened.

Therese's act of poisoning is not part of a simple process of self-affirmation. It is a blind, spontaneous recoil against an entire order of social life by one who's reflective grasp has penetrated the veneer of security it provides. Also, one who sees the way the self that emerges in such an environment is constrained to discern things in a way that confirms the validity of the social norms. The radical incompleteness of the individual lives that partake of that society is covered over, suppressed.

It is worth saying something about Mauriac's conception of sincerity in relation to other philosophical accounts of this notion. Lionel Trilling defines sincerity as the state or quality of the self which refers primarily to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling' (Sincerity and Authenticity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 2). I think it is this type of view that Stewart Sutherland is criticising when he considers the concept of 'integrity' and questions the adequacy of a view of integrity which sees it as necessarily involving a unity and consistency of action and thought. He lucidly connects some forms

of integrity more closely with self-identity (see 'Integrity and Self-identity' in ed. A.P. Griffiths, Ethics, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Mauriac also seems to include self-identity in his notion of sincerity, so that the concept comes very close to the notion of authenticity in existentialist writings. Authenticity does not seem to be encapsulated by any simple correspondence between avowed principle and actual conduct. It can often include some insincere behaviour, as in Sartre's portrayal of Marcelle in his The Age of Reason, and in Mauriac's own heroine, Therese Desqueyroux. Jacob Golomb says that authenticity '...calls for no particular contents or consequences...but focuses on the origins and intensity of one's emotional-existential commitments' (In Search of Authenticity, London: Routledge, 1995, 7). This does have some bearing on Mauriac's concept of 'sincerity'. However, the latter is not merely about degree of existential commitment; it also includes an explicit epistemological consciousness, a capacity to discern the nature of the self's situation. This aspect is close to that element in Sartrean authenticity which Linda Bell draws attention to in her Sartre's Ethics of Authenticity (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1989). Bell gives a quotation from Sartre himself: 'Authenticity...consists in having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the risks and responsibilities it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror or hate' (46). One Sartrean example she discusses is that of a homosexual who, in recognising his past life as that of a homosexual, also recognises that he is in his past in the mode of not being in it. That is, he is not completely characterised by his past. Now this is akin to Therese Desqueyroux's refusal to accept that her previous entrenchment in the norms and thought-forms of the provincial Landes middles-class does not completely constitute her being.

There are at least two differences between Sartrean authenticity and Mauriacan sincerity. Firstly, Mauriac does not ultimately emphasise autonomous freedom. For him,



such freedom is paradoxically what is sought in the middle class mentality of keeping oneself beyond the reach of recognising one's own lack of sufficiency. Secondly, there is a terminological difference. Sartre uses 'sincerity' as a term with a meaning altogether different from 'authenticity' and what Mauriac means by sincerity. Sartre says that the sincere man urges the homosexual, in a case similar to the above, to recognise himself as a homosexual, in other words, to identify himself as a thing. This involves pushing him '...to be what he is in order no longer to be what he is' (See Being and Nothingness, trans. H.E. Barnes, New York: Philosophical Library, 1956, 52).

To conclude this point, we can see in Therese Desqueyroux an example in which a striving to reflect on and articulate one's attachment to certain beliefs and values is far from being necessarily self-affirming, as the Unreflectiveness-thesis has it.

## II

We can next turn to the second issue highlighted at the beginning of this section, namely, how unreflectiveness can itself promote a condition that is far from self-renouncing.

To illustrate this we can start with Mauriac's portrait of Therese's husband, Bernard. He is characterised by Therese as '...of the blind, implacable race of simple souls' (TD 24). Therese also characterises Bernard's sister, and her childhood friend, Anne de la Trave, in this way and qualifies this with the phrase: '...who are content merely to be alive' (TD 36). Immersed in the endless round of hunting that is his chief pleasure in life, and his family commitments, his life is a cycle of pleasure and propriety that he cannot see beyond.

Bernard is unreflective in the sense that he accepts everything that social convention has taught him. His self has no space other than in the categories handed down to him by the powerful institutions of society and the family. Because he can see only as those institutions have taught him to see he is incapable of reflecting on his own insufficiency.

Bernard is one who is '...satisfied if he could see, in the shortest possible time, all there was to be seen' (TD 29). He is '...a man who had never once in his life put himself in another person's shoes, to whom the effort to get outside himself, to see himself as others saw him, was inconceivable...' (TD 78). With his '...fat paunch...his peremptory way of talking, his self-complacency' (TD 69). The term 'complacent' is generally a secular one. But in this sense of self-complacency, Mauriac is bringing in a religious dimension and referring to a spiritual impoverishment. But the spirit that drives Bernard's unreflectiveness is other than a religious one.

The spirit of the family inspires his every action, making it impossible for him to hesitate even for a moment. Always, in every circumstance, he knows what must be done in the interests of the family...Bernard will laugh at your carefully reasoned defence. "I know what's got to be done". He always knows what's got to be done.

If at times he finds himself hesitating, he says: "We discussed all that at a family council, and we've made up our minds"...(TD 64).

Therese can chide him: 'What an odd creature you are, Bernard, with your constant fear of death! Do you never have a feeling, as I do, of utter futility? No? Doesn't it occur to you that the sort of life people like us lead is remarkably like death?' (TD 49). The answer, of course, is that he does not. His life is one of self-complacency and self-satisfaction that puts him at a greater distance from sanctity than even someone such as Therese who, on a conventional moral evaluation, turns out to be a poisoner!

Lack of reflectiveness about her own values had also, in the earlier part of Therese's life, led her to cling to the safe environment where her middle class self can flourish in security. Such a life had prevented her from seeing the true motivations behind her actions. Later she comes to see that, for example, she had avidly sought marriage for her self's need for a refuge. She had sought it not ultimately for 'pride of possession and the opportunity

to dominate so much as a refuge' (TD 26). A refuge. The real motivation was not, as her social background had had her believe, material wealth and prestige in itself. She '...was eager to assume her rightful position...the place that she was destined to fill...She...entered, as it were, into an Order. She had sought safety, and found it' (TD 26). In short, Therese had felt the all too human desire, as felt by May in another of Mauriac's novels, Le Chair et Le Sang, for '...that ordered, that regulated, existence, and more than anything else, that climate of moral cleanliness and dignity' (107). Now this is distinct from, goes deeper than, a mere desire for wealth. But Mauriac's point is that it is not more religious. It is really but the desire of the self to acquire by its own machinations the sense of its own dignity and security. The Jansenist streak in Mauriac sees this as anathema. Human nature is, for him, inherently 'torn and twisted' and can achieve nothing in the way of genuine dignity.

This unreflectiveness had fostered self-deception in Therese. It is important to be clear about the nature this form of self-deception (associated with Therese and also with Louis as discussed in the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis). In Mauriac, self-deception has to be understood in relation to the notions of self-knowledge and self-identity. Not all accounts of self-deception found in the philosophical literature manage to encapsulate the nature of this form of self-deception. We can leave aside those accounts which model self-deception on an inter-individual dialogue. [1].

A more promising conceptualisation is to be found in the Wittgensteinian approach of Ilham Dilman. Dilman's approach rejects the uncritical constraints of the inter-individual model and directs attention to the depth grammar found in instances involving the concept of self-deception. An example is to be found in his interpretation of a case found in Sartre of a young woman who accepts all the conventional approaches of courtship from a young man but is afraid to acknowledge to herself that she is attaching herself to him. She wants to avoid exposing herself to blame or ridicule. Dilman says that, '...because she evades

recognising what she herself wants and her responsibility for what she does she is self-deceived. She is not just deceived about herself, she is also deceived in herself' (Existentialist Critiques of Cartesianism, London: Macmillan, 1993, 147-8). In another paper we are given an account of how a person comes to recognise that she has been the victim of self-deception and, through such recognition, comes to self-knowledge. In his 'Moral Judgement and Deception' (in eds. D.Z. Phillips and Peter Winch, Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars, London: Macmillan, 1989) Dilman claims that Tolstoy's Kitty Scherbatsky, when she asks the question 'Am I really interested in my neighbour?', is not seeking here some answer in terms of something that can be detached from what she is, something that shows a correspondence with the facts. Self-deception here would not be akin to the deception involved when a spy poses as a businessman. Nor would it be amenable to the kind of resolution-process examined in John Wisdom's famous essay, 'Gods', a process of clarification as to whether a concept is applicable after all the facts have been singled out. As Dilman says: '...when I consider whether an action is really admirable, I cannot leave myself out' (122). Self-deception here is not '...to be deceived about what one is like but to be deceived in what one is like' (121). The conception of oneself here is '...as aspect of the kind of person (one) is'. 'The deception was not simply in her apprehension of herself, but in her soul...Her desire to serve the needy was soiled...by the desire to think well of herself' (121).

Kitty comes to recognise her self-deception. Dilman elsewhere, in 'Self-Knowledge and the Possibility of Change' (SKPC), stresses that such self-knowledge or finding oneself, is a matter of gaining a certain form of autonomy.

How does Dilman conceive of this autonomy? Dilman says that what determines a person's identity are his '...allegiances, convictions, loyalties, (and) commitments' (SKPC 139). In the movement from self-deception to self-knowledge '...I become true or authentic.

I become myself, I act from conviction; in being myself I acquire autonomy...' (SKPC 143).

The person who attains this self-knowledge

...will be more at one with himself, more of him will be behind what he does...(and he)....comes to accept much about himself and his circumstances that cannot be changed...and finds greater freedom in doing so. As Rush Rhees puts it in his recollection of Wittgenstein: 'Try to become a different man' would often be, "Try not to deceive yourself about what you are"...(SKPC 144).

The freedom mentioned here also underlies Dilman's claim that the man who has no self-knowledge, the man who does not know where he stands, '...has no solid core to him...(and) is at the mercy of external influences' (SKPC 139). It is interesting to recall the discussion of the Wittgensteinian idea of 'independence of the world' in Chapter 1 and to compare this last quotation with that. There is a strong parallel in the idea that freedom, authenticity and autonomy are to be gained by the person able to accept one's circumstances.

Mauriac's conception of the demise of self-deception and the consequent self-knowledge associated with self-renouncing faith is not akin to Dilman's view.

Firstly, Dilman's talk of autonomy, of a person taking charge of his life, and doing so through being himself implies that self-knowledge is akin to a Maslow-type self-actualization. (See A.H. Maslow The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, New York: Viking, 1971). This is not the self-knowledge that Mauriac is drawing attention to. For Mauriac the self-knowledge that is associated with self-renunciation is not a matter of taking charge of one's life but of realising one's vulnerability and dependence on God. This also involves dying to the old self that is enmeshed in the roles required by social institutions and living without questioning its complacent security. (It is interesting to note one part of D.Z. Phillips' criticism of Dilman in his 'Self-Knowledge and Pessimism' (IE 221-228). Phillips' point is that Dilman's account is unduly optimistic and overlooks the possibility of cases

where self-knowledge brings the subject to an awareness of its failure. 'The failure may be such that the person would not dream of speaking of his being in charge of his life' (IE 223). In Mauriac it is the sense of dependency that precludes the believer ever speaking of being in charge of his life).

Secondly, Mauriac is not seeking to show us a way in which one's real, latent, self-identity is to be brought to the fore. He is concerned with casting off the self-identity that is tied in with all the institutions of this world.

It might be objected that Mauriac's novel is really dealing with a different form of unreflectiveness from that which the Wittgensteinian position associates with self-renouncing faith. In reply, what we find in Mauriac is the idea that any unreflectiveness signals an enmeshment in a selfhood tied to the institutions of this world. Whilst the Wittgensteinian position sees the purity of faith increasing in relation to its degree of unreflectiveness, Mauriac stresses the converse. For him the higher degrees of self-renunciation involve dissociation from the worldly self - the self constituted by the institutions of this world. Such dissociation involves a reflective discernment of the self's plight.

We can summarise this sub-section as follows. Mauriac sees unreflectiveness as inadequate to genuine religion on two counts. Firstly, it can buttress the self against recognition of its depravity. Secondly, it can lead to a self-affirming but unwarranted belief in the self's dignity. This indicates attachment to the self's thorough dependence on being defined solely in terms offered by the institutions of this world and therefore to be immune to an appropriate responsiveness to the Divine. All this involves a certain form of self-deception which I have contrasted from accounts of this concept found in some philosophical writings.

Before closing this section of the chapter I would like again to refer to premise 1 of the argument cited at the beginning of this section. In Therese Desqueyroux we find a further rejection of this premise. Thus Therese can say:

The women of the family aim at the renunciation of all individual life. The complete sacrifice of the individual to the species is very fine; I can feel the beauty of their self-effacement...But I, but I...

In Therese's hesitancy, her distrust of this effacement, we find Mauriac's rejection of self-renunciation as an erasure of the self. The sincerity, the 'living against the world' that characterises Therese is not a matter of removing the self. Nor, for Mauriac, is it to be had by erasing individuality. Rather, it is to be attained through finding out what we really are. Only then can we be ready to receive grace. Jean Azevedo in the novel '...denied that there could be any worse depravity than the denial of self' (TD 60). This sense of 'self-denial' relates to denying the needs of the self. The denial of self required by the socially respectable Christianity which was inauthentically religious for Mauriac, prevented the possibility of recognising that '...accepting ourselves for what we are forces each one of us to come to grips with his real nature...' (TD 60). Accepting what we really are involves renouncing the self that is the product of those stifling institutions of society and family.

Mauriac's model of self-renouncing faith stresses not a deletion of self so as to enable the subject to live without the need for consolation but on the effort to remove the masks which we cling to, which are forced on us by fate, and which suppress the self. Louis in Le Noued de viperes writes in his journal:

(N)o one lives with his face uncovered, no one. Most men ape greatness or nobility. Though they do not know it, they conform to certain fixed types...This the saints know and they hate and despise themselves because they see themselves with

unclouded eyes...so defenceless, so open and so naked (348).

This is the 'living against the world' discussed earlier in connection with Therese Desqueyroux. It perhaps has parallels with many of the elements Richard Mouw describes in his chapter 'The Reformation's "Naked Self"' (in The God Who Commands, Notre Dame: University Press, 1990, 55-75) in connection with Calvinist writing on 'roles' and 'hypocrisy'. The '...exposed self is not naked in the sense of 'un-roled'; rather the nakedness consists in the revelation of what the self's true role is in the drama of life as God sees it' (73). Similarly, Mauriac does not see any prospect of, nor any religious value in, removing all roles. The saints see themselves as 'naked' but this does not mean that they, anymore than anyone else, manage to break away completely from being 'fixed types'. They despise themselves in so far as their clinging to being of a particular 'type' or role prevents the recognition of their nakedness before God.

#### IV

We can now summarise this discussion of the relation of the Unreflectiveness-thesis to Mauriac. Firstly, in the novel Therese Desqueyroux Mauriac shows us that, contrary to the Unreflectiveness-thesis, reflective articulation of one's values and attachments can have a legitimate place in self-renouncing faith. Secondly, he also shows us how unreflectiveness, as epitomised in Therese's early life, and in her husband Bernard, can actually be self-affirming rather than self-renouncing, and can involve a form of self-deception. Thirdly, we found that in Mauriac self-renunciation is not a matter of an absence or erasure of self. Rather it is a discernment of how our roled self, incubated by the institutions of society, masks our dependence on God. For Mauriac, the Unreflectiveness-thesis is neither intrinsic to self-renouncing faith nor is it inherently self-renouncing.



### 3. Mauriac and the Absoluteness-Thesis

In the account of the Wittgensteinian position in Chapter 1 the Absoluteness-thesis implies that self-renouncing faith is an end in itself, wholly discontinuous from relative ends. In this section I want to show that in Mauriac's view such a thesis is not intrinsic to self-renunciation. Indeed, the pure disinterestedness envisaged by the Absoluteness-thesis is held to be impossible in the context in which self-renunciation takes place.

The Absoluteness-thesis is derived from a view of human nature that has a marked emphasis on the autonomy of the self. There is a Kantian flavour to the idea of the end-in-itself/further-end distinction. The Kantian model is imbued with a particular ideal: a view of the moral self as striving for a radical autonomy in the sense of a capacity to suppress all contrary inclination. Part and parcel of this view is the moral self's effort to direct itself to something that stands wholly unconnected to the self's appetitive and desirous inclinations.

This is what Martha Nussbaum has termed rational self-sufficiency in her book The Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 3). Rational self-sufficiency gives expression to an aspiration to make the goodness of a good life safe from luck through the controlling power of reason. The Wittgensteinian position also implies a self-sufficiency, though not one deriving from or powered by reason. Yet it is a self-sufficiency in the sense that it posits a moral reaction in the self that is wholly discontinuous from the natural world. What goes on there is irrelevant to genuine value. Mauriac's view denies this to a far higher degree than would many theists. For him the self is a product of fate, a consequence of social and inherited forces prevalent in the natural world. The reactions of such a self cannot be wholly disengaged from the natural world. Man, as the product of the interaction between biological drives, inherited psychological traits and societal pressures ends up as a pawn in a vast deterministic universe. Mauriac questions

whether a pure disinterestedness is possible. But he goes further than this. He rejects the idea that such a disinterestedness is possible in a context in which self-renunciation takes place. One work where this comes out is in the novel Le Baiser au Léproux (A Kiss for the Leper).

Le Baiser au Léproux's central character, Jean Pelouyere, finally arrives at renunciation through a transformation of weakness. Yet in his weakness he never secures any triumphant autonomy that makes him wholly detached from his own needs and cravings for fulfilment. We cannot say that his sacrifice involves any relation to something that is absolute and divorced from the self's own needs. Rather, selfhood and self-needs are the product of fate. The idea of a self able to conceive of anything without reference to those needs is ultimately incoherent.

Jean Pelouyere, the 'leper', is set apart from others by an ugliness of epic proportions. In his self-loathing the reader comes to recognize a deep humility as well as a pronounced loneliness. Having suffered a childhood of being laughed at or simply ignored Jean now, in his youth, seeks out solitude and ventures out only in the heat of the afternoon when he can be assured of not meeting anyone. If by mischance he ever ends up in some social encounter a '...state of nothingness is his normal existence' (BL 16). At the brink of manhood his isolation is magnified by being an only child of a widowed and wealthy father who dignifies his own weakness and failure to do anything with '...the name of stoicism or Christian resignation' (BL 20). Jean's separation from others is exacerbated by his natural shyness. His life thus far has brought him to see himself as stupid and an object of universal mockery. The '...most delightful of all the hours of the day' is that when he wanders down the winding lane to enter the church by the symbolically 'smallest door'. In its scented darkness, 'slug-like' Jean Peloueyre finds the only tryst he has ever known (BL 19).

One hurried reading of a page from Nietzsche puts paid to the intensity of his religious faith for a time.

He...gulped down the two hundred and sixtieth aphorism of Beyond Good and Evil, which treats of the two moralities - the Morality of the Masters and the Morality of the Slaves...(H)e had suddenly made the discovery that for him religion meant refuge...Someone upon the altar took the place of the friends he had never had, and that devotion...which he would have given to a mother had become concentrated upon the Virgin...Had he been blessed... with the kind of face that women never tire of stroking, surely he would not have stayed content with a crowd of old crones and domestic servants? He was of the race of slaves denounced by Nietzsche. He could discern in himself the distinguishing mark of servitude...His whole being was made to be trampled underfoot (BL 17).

So begins Jean Peloueyre's half-hearted rebellion.

From here on, circumstance conspires to lead him to tragedy. At about this time the local priest has persuaded Jean's father that the family name and wealth must be perpetuated and that a wife should be found for Jean. The candidate is to be Noemi, a girl of good family which had come upon somewhat hard times. Moreover, she is a girl

...bred to obedience...In order to convince her (her parents found it) enough to repeat the popular saying of the neighbourhood, that the son of Peloueyre is not the sort of man a girl refuses (BL 40).

So on their first arranged meeting she takes in the measure of the '...larva that was to be her destiny...looked at her destiny in the face, knowing that it could not be avoided' (BL 34).

Why does Jean Peloueyre agree to such a marriage? His father certainly expected him to put up a great deal of protestation. But, as Mauriac shows us, this prospect comes at just

that point in Jean's life when he has become conscious of a supposed alternative to his servitude. In secret he can say to himself: 'I am one of the Master Race, the Master Race, the Master Race!'. Though Mauriac is careful to point out that this is no potential hero about to be obsessed with his triumph. For Jean Peloueyre still '...looked upon the world from the depths of his humility, marvelling to think that the d'Artailhs should actually be envied on his account...' (BL 37). In his humility he feels, at last a sense of self-worth that someone less humble would not perhaps have felt at such a match. That is why he grasps at the hope of happiness, at the hope that he too could be loved.

Jean Peloueyre's confidence and elation do not last long. The day of the wedding was ...a terrible day! Shame and timidity flowed back with sudden force to overwhelm Jean Peloueyre...(H)is sense of hearing, sharpened by long years of shooting trips, enabled him to catch the pitying comments of the crowd. He heard a man's voice murmur: "What a dam' shame!" Young girls, perched on their chairs, spluttered with laughter...(BL 42).

The wedding night is a similar disaster, described succinctly by Mauriac:

Long was the battle waged by Jean Peloueyre, at first with his own ice-bound senses, and then with the woman who was as one dead. As day was dawning...(he) dared not make a movement. He lay there looking more hideous than a worm beside the corpse it had at last abandoned (BL 43).

On their return home Noemi takes to helping her hypochondriac father-in-law and is thus able to avoid as much as possible the husband she finds repulsive. Her care is largely motivated by the thought of having '...one more hour subtracted from the horror of the dark nuptial chamber' (BL 50). Yet she also detests her inability to find him anything but repulsive. In bed they lie as far away from one another as possible.

Now and again Noemi, stretching a hand to touch the face which now, because she could not see it, seemed less odious, would find it warm and moist with tears. At such times, filled with remorse and pity, she would strain the unhappy creature to her...(BL 47).

But in daylight she finds she that her pity cannot overcome her sense of revulsion.

Mauriac here gives us a powerful picture of the way self-renunciation involves not disinterestedness but awareness of the lack of autonomy in Man. Noemi detests her sense of revulsion but is powerless to overcome it. Similarly we find that Jean becomes increasingly distressed at the effect his presence has on her. He spends as many hours as possible pigeon shooting so as to try to relieve her misery by being out of sight. But he sees her terrible dejection, '...her whom, by the mere fact of his presence, he hourly murdered' (BL 47). 'The simple fact of his being there was enough to suck the life from this young body' (BL 49). Moreover, he finds that

(t)he very ruin that he caused made her all the dearer to him. Was ever a victim more truly loved by her executioner (BL 49).

Jean, despite his purity, yet finds he experiences a trace of self-satisfaction at the tragedy his existence is causing. In this he is conscious of himself feeling that his lack of nothingness is not, after all, total. His existence, despite its being ignored from childhood, despite its virtual nothingness in society, yet can affect another human being and in this way achieve some sort of acknowledgement.

This is most startlingly put in the idea that forms the title of the book. The 'Kiss of the Leper' is the kiss that the saints traditionally gave. As their marriage deteriorates into greater horror, Noemi despairs ever more and more over her sense of disgust and desperately tries to overcome it.

Often she would call out in the night, begging him to come to her. When he pretended to be asleep she would get up, go over to his bed, and kiss him - as saints, once upon a time, were in the habit of kissing lepers. No one could tell whether the stricken wretches rejoiced to feel upon their sores the warm breath of the Blessed...(BL 77).

Mauriac's point in the novel is that even the kiss of the saints was not a kiss that could be wholly disinterested. They too lacked the autonomy that could in principle make it a gesture detached wholly from any benefit for the self. The kiss was really a gesture of compassion and self-benefit for the saint, and an expression by the latter of total dependency on God's grace.

Jean Peloueyre sacrifices his life for Noemi's happiness. In repeatedly visiting an old acquaintance who has a contagious disease Jean himself contracts the illness and finally dies. His act is in many ways an expression of simple and genuine piety and compassion for another:

Not that he thought of himself as a martyr. People had always said of him that he was a 'poor creature', nor had he ever doubted that they were right. Looking back over the grey waters of his life, he felt strengthened in his self-contempt...(BL 82).

Yet the point to note is the way Mauriac renders Jean's sacrifice both a selfless act and yet one which is driven by the self's need. His life-long, now ingrained sense of self-contempt is something we have to recall when considering his sacrifice. His sacrifice, though compassionate, is also an expression of his own need to live out the course of lowliness that has been his life. But his act is shown, by Mauriac, to be no less self-renouncing for that. For Jean has come to a deep acknowledgement that all he is to have is that which God gives.

To conclude, for Mauriac the Absoluteness-thesis is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith. The pure disinterestedness envisaged by that thesis is in Mauriac's view impossible in the context in which self-renunciation takes place. For it is intrinsic to such renunciation that the self realise its total incapacity for such disinterestedness and, accordingly, to place itself wholly at the mercy of God.

#### **4. Mauriac and the Anti-Consolation Thesis**

It will be recalled from the discussion in Chapter 1 that the Anti-Consolation thesis holds that self-renouncing faith is not held for any consolatory purposes. I shall seek to show in this section that the Anti-Consolation thesis is not intrinsic to Mauriac's conception of self-renouncing faith. Indeed, we find in Mauriac that there is a sense in which believing in God in the hope of consolation is actually integral to self-renunciation.

A clear example of stress on the consolations associated with the reception of divine grace is found in the following reference to Pascal:

(I)n spite of his Jansenism, Pascal bore in his sick and suffering heart, the most joyous soul: "I am as happy" wrote Jacqueline to him, "to find you gay in your solitude as I was unhappy when I saw you were so in the world..." Pascal, the joyful penitent, writes to Mademoiselle de Roannez that the sufferings of Christians "are not without pleasure and are overcome only by pleasure". He warns her not to think "that piety consists only of bitterness without consolation". What holy delight bursts out in that fine Jansenist expression: "The victorious delectation of grace!" (MGH 9).

The delight to be had from divine grace is sometimes alluded to in Mauriac's novels. Louis in Le Noeud de vipères experiences it when near to death. Jean Peloueyre in Le Baiser au lépreux seems also to glimpse it briefly before dying.

Mauriac stresses the inaccessibility of consolation from all worldly sources. This derives from Pascal's view of the misery of Man without God. Mauriac's novels seek to illustrate this condition, to show the dependence of Man on consolation and how, though some things are conventionally taken to be consolatory, they turn out through further experience not to be. For self-renunciation involves, not giving up the desire for consolatory fulfilment but, realizing that there is only one place in which this consolation is ultimately to be found: in love of God above all things.

In Mauriac we have a brand of Catholicism in which the emphasis is on the lonely, isolated subject confronting the world without the communal and vicarious machinery conventionally believed to be part and parcel of Catholicism. Lest this be thought to be a Protestant trait, we have further to acknowledge Mauriac's suspicion of family relationships and the institution of marriage. Family life and loved ones can form serious barriers to the self's realization of its need for the love of God. His novels trace in precise detail the ways in which this occurs.

Adherence to the middle class social institutions of marriage and the family, and the phenomenon of romantic love for another individual, are expressions of a deep seated human craving for a form of self-fulfilment. Such fulfilment is about the self coming to achieve a state of belongingness through interaction with others. But Mauriac denies that such fulfilment is genuinely attainable from the relationship of this world.

Why should Mauriac deny that the self's fulfilment is to be had through such relations? To appreciate this we have to examine his view of the way such relations are seen as not involving a genuine engagement with the self at all. Mauriac believes that we construct others in the light of our own needs and desires. We manufacture our own conceptions of the other person and are unable to respond to that person except in terms of our own construction. Consequently, the other person cannot find fulfilment in contact with us,



anymore than we can find such fulfilment in relations with him or her.

This theme is particularly prominent in Le Desert de l'amour (The Desert of Love). This is a novel with three central characters. Both Dr Courreges, the middle aged and successful doctor, and his rebellious son Raymond fall in love with the unattainable Maria Cross, stained madonna and mistress to an uncouth businessman. All three characters suffer a deep psychological emptiness. In different ways, they are outcasts from the surrounding society. Fundamentally, they are unable to obtain, from conventional relationships, the fulfilment that they crave.

On the brink of manhood, Dr Courage's son, Raymond, is relieved to enter the impersonal world of the tram filled by the working classes for his journey home from school. This world

...stood in his mind for freedom, for deliverance. At last he could feel himself alone, surrounded by indifferent faces and incurious eyes...(T)he darkness, shredded only at intervals by scattered streetlamps and the glare of occasional bars, shut him away from the world, isolated him in a universe that reeked of damp working clothes. Dead cigarettes dangled from sagging lips; faces seamed in coal-dust lay tilted back in sleep; newspapers slipped from hands gone numb; a hatless woman held up her novelette to catch the light of the lamps, her lips moving as though in prayer (DA 9).

Raymond finds something more genuine in the impersonality of the tram journey than in the mock personal world of the middle class family. When Mauriac describes the suburban family home Raymond returns to, we find images of tedium and barrenness. There he is of less interest to his married sister than the dog. She and her husband sit '...isolated and aloof, supremely indifferent to everything that did not concern them or their little ones' (DA 11). There is the mother in law who feels the exclusion thrust upon her by Dr Courreges' wife.

This is the household of

endless conversations...full of trivial phrases that dropped dead about the doctor's chair. As a rule they had to do with household matters, each of the women present rushing to do battle for her own particular member of staff, so that the encounter become a squalid Iliad in which the quarrels of the servants hall set the various patron Goddesses at one another's throats...(DA 16).

Mauriac presents a picture of the fatal blindness in Man: seeking freedom and happiness in empty conventions and pastimes. Raymond will make use '...of anything that came his way...as a weapon against those whom he called the "corpses"' (DA 12). These seem to include both his own family and most of his school fellows.

His father also is frustrated at the emptiness in his own life and craves some further meaning to it. With his brutish adolescent son, as with almost everyone else, Dr Courreges confronts a 'powerlessness to give expression to his feelings (which) was his habitual martyrdom' (DA 13). Elsewhere his '...kindness of heart was widely recognized (for his actions)...bore witness to the good that lay so deeply embedded in him that it was like a man entombed' (DA 13). In social encounters he can only respond with '...a growl and a shrug' (DA 13) and hides behind a veil of professionalism which excludes even his wife. She also is '...tangled in her clumsy efforts at tenderness...always groping her way forward with outstretched hands. But whenever she touched him it was to bruise' (DA 19). Mauriac emphasises the 'desert...that separates individuals' (DA 38) so completely that it is as if each self inhabits a different planet (DA 42).

Maria Cross becomes the object of love for both father and son, though neither knows of the other's obsession. And she, in turn, finds her own response to them ultimately unfulfilling.

The original point we find in Mauriac's work is the way the self is inaccessible and yet is moulded and affected by those around it. The self emerges in the context of powerful social institutions, such as the family, marriage and conventional romantic love. The image of the self comes from 'within' only by being a direct response to impositions from outside.

Dr Courreges' self is an example of this. He is everywhere seen as the timid professional person, respected for his expertise. Maria Cross, the fallen woman, tells him: "You're the noblest human being I've ever known...the mere fact that you exist makes me believe in the reality of goodness" (DA 33) she tells him. Later she says of him that he is '...a man without passions and without sin, a man impervious to evil, incorruptible, living in a world far above the earthly world of other men' (DA 85). Society sees him in much this way and his life is essentially a process of conformity to the character-type that has come to be forced on and joined with him. This means that, on the one hand, his self is constantly seeking to conform to that ideal. On the other hand, there is a sense in which he is unknown by all who surround him.

As an adolescent, Raymond '...is only too ready to accept the image imposed on him by others' (DA 23). His inward torment derives from a misplaced belief in his own uncomeliness which is incubated by his school fellows. So Raymond becomes brutish; he responds by 'glorifying in wildness and dirt' (DA 24). Similarly, when he meets Maria Cross, his idealisation of her changes the nature of his self and he becomes more sensitive, clean but also more devious. Yet Maria Cross similarly fails to see Raymond in his particularity as a virile but uncertain adolescent, fascinated by society's view of her as a 'bad woman'. For many weeks she had been conscious of his incongruity amid the anonymity of the working classes on his regular tram journey. After several meetings she clings to her '...darling theory of Raymond's angelic purity' (DA 88):

She would not let herself...dwell upon a fiercer pilgrimage of love...Not for all the world would she destroy the childish innocence which filled her with such fear and adoration (DA 88).

Maria's image of Raymond is doomed to disappointment. During their final meeting

Seeing him there in the flesh, she could not fill the void between the endless agitation of her heart and the being that had caused it...She looked at him, trying to bring into focus her desire, her pain, her hunger, her renunciation, and this long, lean youth who looked so like an overgrown puppy...But she failed to recognize the peculiar expression in his eyes that betokened the blind fury of the timid man...(DA 110).

Many years later Raymond, after a chance encounter, ponders on his failure to attract her.

The narrator comments:

Wasn't there anything he could try? He was a victim of that fatality which condemns us to play the role of a man in whom a woman makes exclusive, unalterable choice of certain elements, for ever ignoring those others that may, too, be part of him. Every human being with whom we come into contact isolates in us a single property, always the same, which, as a rule, we should prefer to keep concealed. Our misery...consists in our seeing the loved one build up, beneath our very eyes, the portrait of us that she has made, reduce to nothing our most precious virtues, and turn the light full on our one weakness, absurdity or vice...We are forced to share in the vision, to conform to it...(DA 138).

We are forced to share in the vision of us that others create. In turn, both Dr Courreges and Raymond invent various versions of Maria Cross to suit their own need for love and meaning in life becomes a central theme of the novel.

For Mauriac, the self is made in the image created by those around it, an image that is itself subjective and self-serving to its creator who is meeting his or her own needs. Because the image one person holds of his fellow is subjective, and possibly a distortion, the other is condemned to strain futilely to meet an impossible and unrealistic standard. This is part of the distance between individuals. It contributes to the isolation and separation that condemns any seeking of solace and consolation from the conventional ties with others as doomed to failure.

The frustrated passion of Raymond Courreges, his father and of Maria Cross stand for a general impossibility of satisfying contact between human beings. Humanity's principal means of aspiring to a consoling unity that overcomes the desert of solitude is love for another human being. Mauriac portrays it as an empty route. In this he is rejecting the traditional Catholic analogical view of human love as in some measure an indication of the love of God. His Jansenist tendency sees a radical discontinuity between Divine love and that weak, insipid emotion that is all that depraved humanity is, without grace, capable of. Mauriac often cited Pascal's claim: 'Marriage is the lowest of all Christian states, vile and unpleasing to God' (DA 194 is one example). In his preface to Le Fleuve de feu (The River of Fire) he quotes Bousset, who says: 'Oh God...who shall dare speak of this profound and shameful wound that nature bears, of the lust which binds the spirit to the flesh by bonds which are at once so tender and so violent'. The three main characters of Le Desert de l'amour have rejected the conventional married route as inadequate to overcoming their particular deserts of solitude. Yet it is still in human love that they have sought to find solace. For Mauriac, human love, though born of the desert of human solitude, gives rise to a poisonous suffocation. This is especially true of those born into

...lives...hedged about with routine, dominated by a sense of duty...(Here) passion becomes concentrated...There is no way of using it up, no breath of warm air can

reach it and start the process of evaporation. It grows and grows, stagnates, corrupts, poisons and corrodes the living flesh that holds it prisoner (DA 156).

The aspiration for human love leave the three main characters of the novel as unfulfilled and ruined at the end as at the beginning.

Though contact with others is doomed to fail to be consoling in the face of life's meaninglessness, their influence on our life can be indelible. Thus, from Maria Cross's rejection of Raymond's attempted sexual advances begins his seventeen years of seduction and utilisation of other women. All this is the desperate bid to prove to himself, in his almost daily recollection of that first unforgettable rejection, his own desirability. Raymond finally learns something of this after a chance meeting many years later with Maria. He finds himself on

...the brink of this appalling emptiness, of this day without Maria, which was to be the first of many other days without her, he was made aware, at one and the same moment, of his dependence and his solitude. He felt himself forced into the closest possible communion with a woman with whom he would never make contact...He carried within him a tearing, frantic capability of passion, inherited from his father - of a passion that was all powerful, that would breed, until he died, still other planetary worlds, other Maria Crosses, of which, in succession, he would become the miserable satellite... There could be no hope for either of them, for father or for son, unless, before they died, He should reveal Himself Who, unknown to them, had drawn and summoned from the depths of their beings this burning, bitter tide (DA 163).

The urge for fulfilment of self is ingrained in the nature of Man. At the end of the novel the reader leaves Raymond as he is beginning to see that human relations will not provide consolatory fulfilment.

Mauriac does not here portray the way out of the desert. His purpose is to draw attention to the fact of its existence. And in so doing, he hopes that his reference to God (in the last quotation above) will inculcate in the reader the recognition that only in God is consolation and fulfilment to be found.

In his novels Mauriac does not locate self-renunciation in the cessation of the urge for consolatory fulfilment. Rather, self-renunciation is seen to consist in the total dependence of Man on consolation and on the recognition that God alone is able to provide it. Raymond Courreges is not self-orientated because he seeks fulfilment; it is just that in seeking fulfilment in the wrong place he brings tragedy to his own life and those of others. Raymond, like Therese Desqueyroux and like Louis in Le Noeud de viperes, is not seen by Mauriac as self-orientated even though the author recognises that that is how he would be categorised according to a conventional moral assessment. Mauriac sees self-orientation not in the seeking of consolatory fulfilment but in denying (either explicitly or implicitly) the self's need for it. Though in many ways brutal and uncaring, Raymond is a worthy 'hero'. He, like Therese and Louis, comes to recognise a craving for fulfilment which is the necessary prelude to the recognition of the need of God.

To conclude, for Mauriac the craving for consolatory fulfilment for the self is a necessary condition for self-renouncing faith. This is in stark contrast to the Anti-Consolation thesis. The latter, for Mauriac, is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith. Indeed, it draws attention away from what is inherently so intrinsic.

## **5. The Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence Thesis**

In this section I will seek to challenge the general applicability of the thesis that doubt and succumbing to temptation are synonymous. The concept of renouncing the self in Mauriac does not give rise to that equivalence-thesis. I will seek to show this by reference principally

to the novel Le Noeud de Vipères. My comments about the Belief-Virtue side of the thesis will be briefly made at the end of the section.

It is very important to recognize that for Mauriac sin and succumbing to temptation are not necessarily direct affirmations of self at all but the consequence of weakness. The Jansenist in Mauriac views the self as the product of powerful forces of fate, forces which form the very character and nature of the self. Falling into sin is more often a result of confusion than of wilful assertion of the self's centrality. Mauriac himself says in Dieu et Mammon

..to lapse into sin is not to break away from Christianity - it is perhaps to tie oneself to it by even more formidable bonds...(N)either doubt, nor negation, nor even denial could tear off this tunic that is stuck to (the) skin (DM 39).

Of those who fall into sin and temptation Mauriac writes

When they imagine that they have wandered far and wide and seen strange lands, they discover that they have merely been going round in circles, that they have been floundering on the same spot (DM 38).

However far sinners stray from Christianity

...the bonds will bring them back with surprising strength. And again they will find themselves mercifully flung against the timbers. Instinctively they stretch out their arms, they offer their hands and their feet, pierced since childhood (DM 33).

Jenkins writes of the sinner-protagonist of Mauriac's novels that as he '...runs feverishly away from his cross, he is also - necessarily and ambivalently - running feverishly towards the relief of the jolt, the abolition of the illusion of relativity and freedom...' (M 40). This seems to accurately portray the sense of confusion in Mauriac's sinners. They do not sin in an attempt to somehow assert the self, to make self the centre of the world, in any straightforward way.



Before going on to illustrate something of how Mauriac implies the sinner is confused, allusion must be made to the Jansenist character of fate in his work. The manner in which he sees the powerful hereditary and social forces, together with the way human psychology is conditioned to react in certain ways, shaping behaviour and even thought-forms, sets his account within an entirely different set of parameters from those of the Wittgensteinian Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis.

The remainder of this section will comprise a discussion of the nature of the confusion of one sinner who is the central character in the novel Le Noeud de Viperes. The main character in that novel, Louis, is a successful lawyer and businessman whose life is, on the face of it, an example of religious doubt, sin and succumbing to temptation. The temptations he succumbs to are not merely those of the flesh but extend to a malevolently vengeful attitude to everyone around him.

The novel is written in the form of a journal intended, initially, for Louis' wife to see on his death. It is composed at the end of his life, when he is suffering from an illness and believed to be dying. Louis is a man who has risen from poverty to worldly success as a lawyer and married into a prestigious, though somewhat impoverished, family. As a young man prone to self-doubt, he found the joy of love shattered. He discovered that his wife had only married him out of convenience and that she had really loved another. This discovery leads to an alienation from her lasting forty years until her death. During that time Louis lives in the same household but is an isolated figure, facing the hostility and, more than anything, the fear in his wife and children.

The nastiness and vengeance associated with Louis' behaviour is sketched in much detail by Mauriac. One expression of it is his plan to disinherit his wife and legitimate family and pass on his money to his illegitimate son. This plan fails due to the timidity of this son and his mother. It is also manifested in the way he treats everybody, including

various mistresses. One was a young woman who he had saved from a charge of infanticide. For one year he did have a happy relationship with her.

What ruined everything was my inability to keep my demands in check. Not content with letting her live in mean circumstances which were only just one degree above actual poverty, I had to have her constantly at my beck and call. I never let her see anybody. She always had to be there when I wanted her during my brief periods of leisure, and not there when I didn't. She was my property. My passion for possession, and for using and abusing what I possess, extends to human beings...For this one and only time I thought I had found a victim really made to the measure of my demands. I kept a close watch even on the expression on her face...The long and the short of it is that she ran away to Paris. She couldn't stand it any longer (NV 233).

Louis' exhibits an obsession with money.

The few "affairs" which I did begin soon ended, either because my naturally suspicious nature misinterpreted even the most innocent of requests, or because I made myself odious by reason of those manias....endless quarrels with waiters or cab-drivers on the subject of tips. I like to know in advance precisely what I've got to pay...What I found attractive in mercenary love was...that it had a fixed price (NV 232).

Louis hates his own family even. His life is lived at a distance from his wife Isa's infatuation with her 'brood' (NV 234). Isa and the children's life had '...about it a sense of quiet happiness from which I felt myself excluded...it was a quiet sea of love which died into nothingness a few feet away from my presence' (NV 234).

What was the major irritation for Louis was the fact that his wife was indifferent to him. He finally found a way of striking at her which did have an effect on her. He attacked

her religion.

At last I had found a way of bringing you to battle. Formerly my irreligion had been no more than a mould into which I ran the various humiliations which, as the son of a peasant farmer who had made money, I had to endure from my middle-class companions. But now I filled it with all the frustrations I had met with in love and an almost limitless extent of rancorous resentment (NV 235).

In one passage in his account he refers to the Church as '...that agglomeration of habits, formulae and general nonsense' (NV 236). His wife threatens to seek a separation if his presence is going to endanger the spiritual well-being of the children. He decides he has to change strategy. If his anti-religious attitude became known locally this might do him some harm if he were not 'linked' to his wife's prestigious family. In addition, a separation would require him to sell shares which formed part of her dowry. He couldn't face the thought of giving up this investment.

His new strategy consisted of trying to win over the children. But in this he was also unsuccessful.

You had long thrown a holding-force into those three hearts! You controlled all the approaches...you had let them see pretty clearly that a lot of praying would have to be done for poor Papa...I was the "poor Papa", the object of their prayers, the misguided pagan ripe for conversion (NV 237).

Louis expresses Mauriac's distaste for bourgeois piety.

The two elder (children) were already smugly ensconced in the beliefs to which you clung with so sure a feeling for that middle-class comfort which, at a later date was to make them turn their backs on all the heroic virtues and sublime lunacies of the Christian faith (NV 238).

Despite her apparent piety, Louis's wife treated the servants very strictly and resisted their efforts for higher wages. Louis would often refer to the example of Christ.

'I always thought...that Christ laid it down...' Remarks like that always brought you up short...If you were foolish enough to reply that you were not a saint, I would quote the precept: 'be ye perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect' (NV 241).

Louis found his strategy of trying to 'reach' the children ineffective despite his efforts. 'You closed your ranks against me, and presented an impenetrable front' (NV 242) he wrote in the journal. 'Your love of the children obsessed you to the exclusion of every other consideration. All your reserves of kindness and self-sacrifice were used up on them' (NV 341). Louis would use the young seminarist, the Abbe Ardouin, incapable of saying anything but what he really thought, to support certain points he made in his efforts to show that his wife's actions were at odds with her principles. 'Do tell me, Monsieur l'Abbe, is it permissible for us to hate the Jews?'

Mauriac has little sympathy with the middle-class religion practised by Louis' wife. That, however, does not prevent him exposing the vindictiveness of Louis' attitude towards her. This is shown particularly clearly in his attempted seduction of her willing sister, Marinette. Marinette is the young widow of an elderly Baron who has decreed in his will that she will lose her share of the fortune if she remarries. The family is anxious that she does remain single so as not to lose the fortune. She comes to stay with Louis and his wife in the country house. Marinette herself is taken with Louis' freethinking and he is attracted to her gracefulness and antipathy to her sister's sense of propriety. Louis finds, however, that her lack of concern for the fortune, and her insistence that happiness is more important than money is unsettling to him. One night their relationship is almost consummated.

The moon was rising full in the east. She expressed admiration for the long shadows

cast by the elms on the grass. The farm-workers cottages stood blind-eyes in the white radiance. ..She said that on such a night the whole of creation was but a torment to the lonely...I could distinctly see a tear quivering on her lashes...In the world's stillness her breathing was the only sign of life (NV 255)

Mauriac's Jansenist vision emphasises the fatality underlying life in general and especially at such crucial moments.

I took her hand, as I might have taken the hand of an unhappy child, and, like a child she leaned her head upon my shoulder. I received the gift of it merely because I happened to be there. The earth receives the fallen peach. Most human beings come together not as the result of any deliberate choice, but like trees that have grown side by side, their branches interlacing in the simple process of their growth (NV 255).

Within Louis himself, at that moment, there is more than a passive drift with fatality.

But what made me infamous at that moment was that I thought of you (i.e. his wife Isa). Thought how I might be revenged on you, how I might make use of Marinette to cause you suffering (NV 255).

As it happens, they are disturbed by the sound of steps in the lime-walk. Louis composes himself and leads her back into the light, pretending he had not noticed the hint of an emotional disturbance in her tears. In that action Mauriac refers to the hypocrisy behind Louis' supposedly freethinking attacks on religion. Louis fears that the steps are those of the Abbe and doesn't want to go down in his estimation. Marinette's feelings are cast to one side as inconsequential to him. She leaves the following day.

Mauriac portrays Louis' egotism as never wholly and completely an infatuation with self. For example, he recognised in his daughter Marie's piety, something more than the desire for middle-class comfort.

In her there was a touching ardour, a genuine feeling of compassion for the farm labourers and the poor. People said of her: 'She'd give everything she has: money just trickles through her fingers. It's all very charming, of course, but that sort of generosity needs careful watching'...She used to climb on my knee of an evening of her own accord. Once she fell asleep with her head on my shoulder...I was suffering agonies, because I had to keep so still and wanted to smoke. But I sat there like a graven image, and when the nurse came to fetch her at nine o'clock, I carried her all the way up to her room. You stared at me in amazement, as though I had been the wild beast in the legend who licked the feet of the child martyrs...(NV 238).

After Marie's death, Isa's piety is exposed as ultimately secondary to her desire for continued possession of the offspring of her body.

...(H)ow strange it seemed that you, a Christian, should set such store by the corpse. You wouldn't leave it...The Abbe Ardouin spoke of how we must make ourselves like little children if we are to enter the Kingdom of the Father. 'She lives, she sees you, she is waiting for you'. But you shook your head. The words did not even penetrate your brain. Your faith was useless to you. You had thoughts for nothing but that flesh of your flesh, which was going to be laid in the earth and would soon know corruption. It was I, the unbeliever, who realized, as I looked at what was left of Marie, the full meaning of the word 'remains'. I was overwhelmed by a sense of departure, of absence. She was no longer there. That was not her (NV 259).

Louis' love for Marie, in contrast, was not one based on a self-orientated desire to possess but on a selfless appreciation of the girl's virtues in and of themselves.

Underlying Louis' often despicable behaviour and attitude there is a sense, alluded to earlier, of confusion. This is a character who cannot be said to sin merely out of desire, be it desire for gratification or for a sense of dominance. Louis can control his emotional

attachments to a high degree.

(I)n a man of my sort what possible connection could there be between mere self-indulgence and the cravings of the heart? I had ceased to believe that the cravings of the heart could ever be satisfied, and I took good care to stifle them as soon as they showed their heads. I was a past master at destroying all sentiment at the precise moment when the will begins to play a decisive part in matters of love, when a man can still stand on the sidelines of passion and is free to surrender or to hold back while there is still time. I chose the simplest satisfactions - those that may be had for an agreed outlay. I hate being "done", but what I owe I pay...I can't bear the thought that I owe any man a penny. Love, I thought, was something in which one was perpetually giving...and I found it disgusting (NV 232-3).

Ironically, his love of money is not something he can control; it is bred into his need for security. It is a security sought with such a desperation that he has acquired an '...ingrained habit of never setting anything above immediate gain' (228).

It was mentioned above that Mauriac sees the self as largely a product of forces beyond its control: fate and destiny. They influence the nature of the self through heredity and through the kind of society that the individual is brought up in. Louis' state of sin and his frequent succumbing to temptation is a product of an inheritance. The nature of Mauriac's understanding of the influence of fate on the self is important for the purpose of this section. In the journal addressed to his wife he writes:

The drama of our two lives, yours and mine, was conditioned by things which happened to me as a young man...(NV 183).

He goes on:

...I am one of those who...have never known what it is to be young. There may have been an over-plus of gloom, a lack of freshness about my early years. The very look

of me was enough to produce in others a sense of chill, and the more I realized this, the less accommodating did I become...I have never in all my life known what it is to be un-self-conscious, or to laugh or to play the fool. I cannot imagine myself forming one of a party on the "spree". I am by nature one of Nature's wet blankets. At the same time, I am cursed with an excess of sensitiveness, and I was never able to stand being laughed at, no matter how good-humoured the laughter might be. On the other hand, whenever I made a joke at other people's expense, I always, without meaning to, struck so savagely that my victims never forgave me...(NV 185-6)

A little later on he says:

Because of my shyness, and because of my pride, I adopted to women that superior attitude of the hectoring schoolmaster which...they most resent...My youth was a prolonged condition of suicide. I was deliberately uncouth simply because I was afraid of being unconsciously so (NV 186).

He blamed, at the time, his mother for the temperament he had. Since childhood she had cosseted, supervised and looked after him too much and doted on him to a ridiculous extent (NV 186). 'I could not forgive her for lavishing on me the affection which I was fated to have from nobody else' (NV 186). For this he was '...abominably brutal to her' (NV 186) and would fly into rages or totally ignore her.

At law school Louis recounts how he was '..a mere Secondary-School product, the grandson of a shepherd' who could not forgive his companions '...for the hateful sense of envy which their manners roused in me...' (NV 188). 'To a youth of my temperament it never even occurred to try to win their friendship. In fact, I did all I could to make common cause with their adversaries' (NV 188). His hatred of religion began with this in mind. He began to insist that the Mass was '...merely the religious exercise of a class...a species of ancestor-worship adapted to the use of the bourgeoisie, a hotch-potch of rites with nothing



but a social significance' (NV 195).

To someone with his temperament, this awareness of the unpleasant effect he had on people, the consequence of falling in love was to blind him to all caution. It was a staggering discovery to find he was '...capable of arousing interest, pleasure and emotion in another' (NV 195). But that experience is shortlived. After marriage he learns that her well connected, extravagant but now somewhat poor family had encouraged his attentions only because the investments of his poor parents had borne considerable fruits. He also learns that his wife had, in reality, loved another but that his family had opposed the match in fear that consumption would be the result of the union.

This knowledge had a profound effect on Louis.

When I loosed you from my embrace, we felt his presence. I did not want to suffer: I was afraid of suffering. The instinct of self-preservation applies to happiness as to other forms of life. I knew I must not ask you any questions. I let his name burst like a bubble on the surface of our lives. Beneath the waters there slept a principle of corruption, a putrid secret, and I did nothing to stir it from the mud (NV 208). Out of human weakness, the fear of suffering, the fear of having to face his greatest dread, the thought that he was not himself the object of love, Louis keeps silent.

Then began the era of the Great Silence which has scarcely been broken for forty years. There was no outward sign of collapse. We remained united in the flesh...(but)...he (i.e. her former lover) had come,...had accomplished his work of destruction (NV 208).

The combination of heredity, the tension between social classes, between the fact that his wife's family had prestige and he was the son of a peasant who had become rich, his psychological make-up, led to Louis' alienation from everyone around him. And fear is the reason why he cannot confront the source of his hatred of everyone.

More fundamentally, Louis has no sense of self-worth. He knows others are impressed by his polished performance as an advocate. He can exploit others' stereotypical view of him. However, he himself is unimpressed with his abilities and ready to question his own worth. Despite his vindictiveness he endears himself to the reader through his startling honesty, his willingness to recognize the baseness of his actions. Even in the expressions of hatred for his wife he is willing to allow that there is more to her than his classification allows:

...there is a fatal tendency in all of us to simplify others, to eliminate in them everything that might soften the indictment and give some human lineaments to the caricature our hatred craves in order to justify itself (NV 296).

Ultimately his lack of self-worth extends to a feeling that he is not one who can be loved for what he is.

Those who are accustomed to being loved instinctively make all the gestures, and say all the things, most likely to win over their interlocutors. I, on the other hand, have grown so used to being hated and to frightening people, that my eyes, my brows, my voice and my laugh automatically become the servants of this detestable gift of mine, so that they deliver their message before I mean to (NV 317).

Even our gestures and the whole repertoire of inter-personal interaction is determined by what we believe about ourselves, according to Mauriac. Louis' 'detestable gift' is his perceived incapacity to be loved. The love he really craves is that of Isa, his wife.

The passage which gives clearest expression to the reason for Louis' feeling of lack of self-worth is perhaps the following:

If...I had been blessed with a wife that loved me, to what heights might I not have risen? Nobody can go on indefinitely believing in himself unless he gets some help from outside (NV 227).

There is an irony in the reason why Louis, through his lack of self-worth, comes to think that his wife could not possibly love him.

Would you really rather have a husband who couldn't choose a suit or a tie, who hated games and was incapable of the sophisticated frivolity which consists in avoiding all serious subjects, in shying away from emotional entanglements or any show of feeling, and living with care-free elegance? You had accepted the inferior me...because I had happened to have swum into your ken just when your mother, afflicted by her change of life, had convinced herself that you would never find a husband...(NV 212)

Louis, who prides himself on his freedom from bourgeois standards, has been conditioned by the powerful social forces to measure his self-worth in such terms. Terms related to 'sophisticated frivolity', 'avoidance of serious subjects', a sense of taste in the choice of clothing, 'carefree elegance' and a capacity for 'emotional entanglements'. Louis' self has, through the character of his upbringing, been imprisoned in certain categories of thought.

Louis' hatred of virtually everyone is an attempted remedy for his lack of self-worth. It is the natural but inept reaction of a weak, confused creature. And towards the end of his life he comes to see this through the gift of grace. 'For forty years I have cheated myself into believing that I could accept the fact of hatred...(NV 320).

I had refused to look beyond the tangle of vile snakes. I had treasured their knotted hideousness as though it had been the central reality of my being' (NV 343)

Louis' understanding is contained in the quotation from St Teresa of Avila which is given at the beginning of the novel: 'Consider, O God, that we are without understanding of ourselves, that we do not know what we would have, and set ourselves an infinite distance from our desires'.

To summarise we can see in this example a view of the relation of doubt and succumbing to sin and temptation that is different from that posited in the Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis. The latter view, through having a particular understanding of self-renunciation, sees doubt and succumbing to sin as essentially the 'same foe'. Mauriac's different model of self-renunciation, a model in which the Fallen self cannot be extracted to leave a void, gives a different view of this relation. For him, doubt and sin are (although not unconnected) not equivalent but aspects of a confusion in creatureliness. A confusion arising from a blindness as to the worth of the self and the needs of the self. This blindness is a product of the powerful forces of hereditary, family and social influences which shape human self-definition.

What about the Belief-Virtue side of the thesis? Just as sin stems from a confusion, self-renouncing belief derives from a certain clarity about what it is that is ultimately fulfilling for the self. It follows that, for Mauriac, belief is not a virtue in the sense that virtue is meant to denote something discontinuous with the self's interests. Belief entails awareness that faith is where the self's best interests ultimately lie.

## 6. Conclusions

Mauriac's model of self-renouncing faith is very different from that of the Wittgensteinian position. Its basic characteristic is of the rejection of the 'old' self, the self that clings to and is constituted by immersion to the institutions of this world, the very things which preclude recognition of its dependence on God.

From this basic difference we find that Mauriac departs from the theses which the Wittgensteinian position assumes to be intrinsic to self renouncing faith.

(1) Mauriac does not have the Absoluteness-thesis as intrinsic to self-renouncing faith. The pure disinterestedness envisaged by that thesis is impossible in the context in

which self-renunciation takes place. For it is intrinsic to such renunciation that the self realise its total incapacity for such disinterestedness and, accordingly, to place itself wholly at the mercy of God.

(2) There is no Anti-Consolation thesis in Mauriac. Rather, he holds that the craving for consolatory fulfilment for the self is a necessary condition for self-renouncing faith. It contributes to the sense of the self's own weakness and its dependence on God. Thus, for Mauriac, the Anti-Consolation thesis is not only not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith, it is not inherently self-renouncing either. For it directs attention away from what is so intrinsic.

(3) There is certainly no Unreflectiveness-thesis in Mauriac. For him unreflectiveness involves not adherence to Christianity but a means of escaping its demands, which involve acknowledging the dependency of the self. Reflectiveness is required in self-renouncing faith - it is the necessary prelude to a full appreciation of the misery of Man without God. An erasure of self in a cocoon of unreflectiveness has nothing to do with genuine faith.

(4) The Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis is not found in Mauriac. He sees sin not as equivalent to doubt but a matter of a confusion in creatureliness.

## CHAPTER 3: GEORGES BERNANOS' CONCEPTION OF SELF-RENOUNCING FAITH

### 1. Introduction: The 'Spirit of Childhood'.

The French writer Georges Bernanos (1888-1948) ranks as a major exemplar of the so-called 'Catholic Novel'. From his first novel Sous le Soleil de Satan (1926) onwards he struggled to provide twentieth century readers with a presentation of the supernatural at work in the fabric of this world. In that first novel we find a tendency towards a faith that relies on miraculous occurrences and the drama of the priest Donissan's struggle with the powerful reality of evil.

In his subsequent writings we find a shift away from a dramatic, in some ways stereotypical, view of self-renunciation as simply a battle against temptation. In La Joie (1929) we find an emphasis on the childlike simplicity of the central character, Chantal, coupled with an emotional fullness that serves as a contrast with the inner emptiness of the other characters, consumed to various degrees by evil. Despite the progress in this novel, Bernanos yet came to feel that Chantal's character was presented as too passive. We can certainly concur because in her case self-renunciation is presented on the model of a receptacle given a quasi-mechanical infusion of grace.

It is with the novel Journal d'un cure de campagne (1936) that we find a distinctive model of self-renouncing faith centred on the idea of L'esprit de l'enfance, the spirit of childhood. This work is expressive of the form of sainthood we find in such Carmelite saints as St Therese of Lisieux. Bernanos came to recognise the contrast between her sanctity and that of the more dramatic, individualistic and assertive type which his first novel has concentrated on. He spoke of the '...supernatural youth incarnated by...St Therese, to the scandal and trial of every set of fanatics...who would like to turn the Church into an

austere cemetery, instead of the garden in bloom' (from an interview quoted in Robert Speaight, Georges Bernanos, London: Collins & Harvill Press, 1973, 266).

In this chapter I shall attempt to show something of the nature of Bernanos' conception of self-renouncing faith. Most of my account will be based on the Journal d'une cure de campagne, though some points will be supplemented by reference to other works, such as the play Dialogues des Carmelites (1949).

To understand the distinctiveness of Bernanos' view of self-renouncing faith we have to understand the idea of the spirit of childhood. In what follows in this section I shall seek to convey what this concept signifies.

In her essay 'Paper Saints', Sandra Marshall explores the difficulties of providing a portrayal of moral perfection in philosophy and in literature. She recounts how Dostoyevsky believed he had failed in Prince Myshkin, his first attempt to portray a wholly beautiful character. She clarifies the problem in the following terms:

How to lose the 'self', yet remain a person (have character) and retain an active place in the world, is the problem. This gives focus to Dostoyevsky's task; how to locate this renunciation of the self in a human life and leave it still genuinely human...The problem is that the 'self' may seem to us to be precisely what is involved in the network of relationships with and attachments to one another which makes up a human life (Scottish Journal of Religious Studies 10, 1989, 108).

Marshall's problem arises because of the assumption which underlies her account. She uncritically assumes at the outset that self-renunciation is a deletion of self and the humanity that goes with it.

In Bernanos we find a model at variance with the latter assumption. In Bernanos self-renouncing faith is not an absence of self but a matter of the nature of the self that is present. The Priest of Ambricourt is characterised by a form of childlike innocence.

But this childlike innocence is not at all comparable to innocence as necessarily devoid of uncharitable motives or unacquainted with misdeeds and regret [1]. Rather, the nature of Bernanos's view of innocence is centred on a humility devoid of worldly self-assurance. Self-assurance involves a sense in which the self, enmeshed in its own capacity to command or captivate others, also remains at a distance from others' ultimate needs.

The Priest of Ambricourt possesses the spirit of childhood. Bernanos equates the spirit of childhood with what he calls 'the spirit of poverty' (J 237). For Bernanos, a self that has this spirit of poverty is one characterised by a freedom from valuing things and relationships from a standpoint of what they bring in terms of personal self-esteem and satisfaction.

The spirit of childhood is a certain way of being in the world. One way of making clearer what this means is to consider what Iris Murdoch says when she rejects the adequacy of the Kantian model of the '...proud, naked will directed towards right action' (The Sovereignty of Good, London: Routledge, 1970, 83) and emphasises states of mind and quality of consciousness as closer to what religion often views as the genetic background of action.

Our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying veil which partially conceals the world. Our states of consciousness...are profoundly connected with our energies and our ability to choose and act (84).

One example she gives of quality of consciousness is 'meekness of spirit' (83). The spirit of childhood is, I suggest, one good illustration of what this may amount to and the type of action it brings forth.

Bernanos builds his portrait of the Priest of Ambricourt by alluding in some detail to his social background. The point of this is not to outline what genealogy a saint must



have. Rather, the poverty of the Priest's origins is indicative of how he 'stands' in terms of relationships with other. It conveys the character of his orientation to the world.

The Priest of Ambricourt is not only of peasant stock, as is also his elder colleague from a neighbouring parish, the genuine and street-wise Priest of Torcy. He is also of the humblest level of the French peasantry. Whereas Torcy's family were successful farmers in the prosperous Flanders countryside, the Priest of Ambricourt comes from a class of landless alcoholics and spendthrifts with little in the way of dignity or moral character to maintain. When his father died and his mother became ill, he lived with an aunt who kept a pub, 'a horrible wooden shanty where they sold gin to miners who were too poor to go anywhere else...On pay-nights our customers didn't even go outside to relieve themselves; they would pass water where they stood...' (J 46-7). The child would crouch, terrified, behind the bar on the few rotting floor boards. 'The dank reek of earth came up between them, earth which was always wet, the reek of mud' (J 47). In such circumstances he had known an acute form of distress.

Amongst the poor...a little boy is all alone...distress is not shared, each creature is alone in his distress; it belongs only to him like his face and his hands (J 48).

The Priest of Ambricourt has known this state of 'distress that has forgotten even its name, that has ceased to reason and to hope, that lays its tortured head at random' (J 48).

This background has given the Priest of Ambricourt something very different from '...the air of pompous self-assurance, of funereal gravity which the privilege of money...bestows on the smallest of small shopkeepers' (J 41). This priest, coming from the lowest social stratum, has never had anything to defend in the concourse of human hierarchies. He recalls at one point how his mother, even in her best clothes, '...could not change that humble furtive look, that wan smile of the poor creatures whose lot it is to bring up other people's children' (J 32). The Priest has inherited something of this and says:

'I am no more able to give orders than to possess' (J 32). In not being raised in the tradition of possession he bears no grudge against the world that fails to deliver the privileges and status that so many adults consider tempting. 'I... never knew the strange...bitterness of the land-owning peasant towards the ungrateful soil itself, for eating up his strength...' (J 33). For Bernanos the spirit of childhood is akin to the spirit of poverty in that it makes possible a form of relating between the self and others which is devoid of dominance and prudence.

Dominance, for Bernanos, is really only a matter of utility, of one self using another for its consolation or sense of self-esteem. A lack of dominance makes possible a form of humanity that achieves a sense of the mystery and the depth of our ties with each other. It makes possible a form of compassion that one who is tied to his or her stake in worldly hierarchies of influences and power cannot achieve. The spirit of poverty that Bernanos is seeking to illustrate, is, for him, something that makes possible a heightened form of fidelity to, and solidarity with, others. In his diary the priest writes: 'Therein lies my whole strength, the strength of children and weaklings' (J 53).

Prudence is seen by Bernanos as a further obstacle to the innocence that is part of the spirit of poverty and of childhood. The Priest of Ambricourt is criticised by church leaders for not being more ready to accommodate himself to commercial dishonesty among some parishioners. Despite ill- health, he adheres without compromise to the hard schedule of visits he has drawn up to ensure regular contact with members of his far flung country flock. His colleagues consider this an excessive duty. He spends endless hours on the road. Often the stomach pains become acute when he is on his bike. But the spirit of poverty does not count the cost of commitment. His elder spiritual guide, the priest of Torcy, tells him: 'You haven't the least shadow of pride, and it isn't easy to judge your experiments, because you push them too far, you risk yourself' (J 79). But Torcy also recognises that giving no heed to the self's security is part of the priest of Ambricourt's innocence. Torcy is

Bernanos' mouthpiece when he says: 'There's a kind of supernatural laziness which comes with age, disappointment, experience...Old priests are as hard as nails! Prudence is the final imprudence when by slow degrees it prepares the mind to do without God' (J 79).

To summarise, what we find in Bernanos is not a conception of self-renunciation as an absence of the intrusive influence of self. Rather, it involves a particular character of self, one imbued with a particular form of childlike innocence. The absence of any thought of self-enhancement, for any prestigious 'place' for the self in the world, which characterises the spirit of childhood, is something Bernanos sees as a pre-requisite to being sensitive to the fragility and the needs of others. (More will be said about this when we come to discuss the concept of pitie in the section on Bernanos's in relation to the Perspective-thesis).

In his conception of the spirit of childhood Bernanos is reacting against another Catholic view of sainthood, one that he particularly associated with Paul Claudel: the heroic idea of the saint. Bernanos says that:

...saints are not like the heroes of Plutarch. Heroes are akin to supermen, but the saint is not a super-man. He embraces his humanity and seeks to live it fully...to follow Him who was most perfectly human (La Liberte Pour Quoi faire?, Paris: Gallimard, 1953, 286. My translation).

This is why Bernanos stresses the impracticality, hesitation and uncertainty of the Priest of Ambricourt. One startling example of this is found in his reaction to the diagnosis that his illness is terminal cancer. At that moment the doctor was watching him

...with an odd mixture of surprise and pity. If one could, I would have died of self-loathing. I should have gone, but I couldn't. I waited for God to inspire me. I waited for the gift of one word, one word that a priest might utter, for that one word I would have given my life...But I could barely stammer the beginnings of the apology on my tongue, tears in my throat were choking me...(J 234).

The words that would project an image of practical priestly dignity and piety elude him. The Priest of Ambricourt's impracticality can be contrasted with that of his alert, street-wise elder colleague, the Priest of Torcy. Torcy knows how to deal with any practical situation. But during the course of the novel he comes to discern how his capable practicality and strength tends to edge too closely to pride rather than sanctity.

(Torcy) was staring me straight in the eyes, and I still wonder if he was really able to distinguish me from all the familiar things around him... No, he couldn't see me. The mere intention to convince me would not have set such tragedy in his eyes. He was battling with himself, against another self, crushed a hundred times, vanquished a hundred times, still in rebellion; ...how deep the wound must have been. He was as though tearing himself with his own hands (J 51).

This is Torcy's recognition of the distance separating himself from that ideal spirit of poverty and the capacity for pity. Torcy says: 'Pity is powerful and devouring. I don't know why we always think of it as something rather snivelling and silly' (J 52). Bernanos saw in the assured and proud capability of Torcy, a man who knows immediately what response is required in any given situation, something that falls short of the self-renunciation exemplified in the saintly Priest of Ambricourt.

Some contemporary viewpoints would reject Bernanos' conception of the spirit of childhood on the ground that it entails a lack of self-respect which, for such viewpoints, is of moral value. The form of such a rejection would depend on the way self-respect is conceived.

One influential account of self-respect is centred on the subject's acknowledgement that he or she has certain basic rights; where those rights are not acknowledged then we have servility. Perhaps the most prominent version of this account is provided by Thomas E. Hill in 'Servility and Self-Respect' (The Monist 57, 1973, reproduced in his collection

of essays Autonomy and Self-Respect, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). From the standpoint of this type of account it might be urged that the Priest of Ambricourt displays a failure to acknowledge his rights as a person in the moral community of equal persons. This means that the spirit of childhood is a hindrance to a moral sense of oneself as a person among persons and owed the equal respect of others. Against this kind of argument it must be stressed that Bernanos is not seeking to lay the foundation of a western form of moral community steeped in democratic values. He is seeking to elucidate the uniqueness of the Church and the kind of solidarity it offers. The nature of this solidarity will emerge during the course of the discussion of this chapter and it is inappropriate to say more about it at this point.

A second type of account of self-respect is centred on the idea that self-respect involves living up to one's values and remaining true to what one ultimately cares about. (Examples of this view are found in: another of Hill's essays, 'Self-Respect Reconsidered', reproduced in the above mentioned collection; John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971, 440-46; Gabriele Taylor, Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). On this type of account a critic of Bernanos might point to the following passage in the Journal:

To doubt oneself is not to be humble...it is the most hysterical form of pride...There must be something clouded in this insuperable disgust which I feel for my absurd self...my natural clumsiness...Doubtless for what it is worth this state of mind is conducive to charity towards my neighbour, since instinctively I put myself in the wrong; I can see other people's point of view. But surely this tends to rob me gradually of confidence, of life, and the hope of doing better (J 211).

The critic could say that lack of this type of self-respect leads to a loss of confidence in the face of the demands made upon one. It is inhibitive of moral action because it makes one

bend to the demands of others rather than carrying out the tasks seen by oneself as morally demanded.

In reply to this line of potential objection we should read the Journal as a novel in which the Priest of Ambricourt achieves a sense of self-love through coming to see the deficiencies in his early view of self-respect, based as it was on a worldly sense of strength in being able to put his values into practice. Early on in the novel the Priest does see his mission in terms of what he can achieve in the way of having a well run parish. He comes along with a plan to put things in order, to increase attendance at Mass, the number of baptisms and the like. The barrier to his success is his natural awkwardness and his manner of letting others speak first, of not being impositional and forceful in his views. By the end of the novel the Priest has learned that the nature of strength, and its relation to self-respect, is far more complex than he had ever imagined. His awkwardness has proved the vehicle to bringing people to God. It has been the way to manifest a receptivity to others that has led them to break out of the bonds of self-orientation. He has learned also something about the nature of the power of God and the example of the suffering Christ. These points are covered in more detail in this chapter in the final sub-section of the section on the Acceptance-thesis. But we can note here what Richard Taylor says about a form of love that he believes is necessary to human life: 'It is not something with which we, as men, should be exhorted to embellish our lives; it is something without which we cannot even be men'. Taylor claims that

...physicians and nurses in children's hospitals well know the consequences to children who lack love...An infant so deprived is as surely starved as if denied food, and the consequences are hardly less horrible...for it is the very spirit that is crippled, and it is seldom that it can ever be reached and healed again...(Such a child) cannot rejoice in his own being, can never love himself, (and) is thus rendered

incapable of loving anything else and hence of ever becoming loved (Good and Evil, London: Macmillan, 1970,238).

Bernanos is seeking to convey the sense of something which he sees is more elemental to the constitution of Man than self-respect in either of the two above senses. This is close to Taylor's idea of a self-love that enables Man to rejoice in his own being and can elicit such a self-love in others.

## **2. Bernanos and the Perspective-Thesis**

The Wittgensteinian Perspective-thesis outlined in Chapter 1 concerns the unreflective view of the whole of life in which the self attains an independence from the world despite the onslaughts of suffering heaped upon it by the course of events in life.

In this chapter it will be argued that the Bernanosian view of suffering is not a form of 'independence from the world' and is incompatible with the Perspective-thesis. The latter is not seen as either intrinsic to self-renouncing faith nor inherently self-renouncing.

We begin with what Bernanos sees as the ultimate cause of suffering. Hebblethwaite rightly claims that

(Bernanos') whole work is directed to the conquest of despair, and in his saints he points to a way of making sense of and overcoming angoisse... (Quoted in P. Hebblethwaite Bernanos, London: Bowes & Bowes, 1965, 116. Hereafter 'BH').

For Bernanos one of the principal sources of despair is the inability to accept suffering.

The disgrace of the modern world is not that it should suffer but that it should suffer in vain. All suffering is vain and intolerable for someone who lays the blame on the obstacle, like a child who beats with his fist an object on which he has hurt himself...(BH 57).

Bernanos believed that the modern world saw suffering as intolerable because it saw it as a foreign imposition, an intrusion from an alien, external world that threatened the dominance of the individualised self.

According to Bernanos' view, the self-renouncing believer sees suffering as confronting not the individualised subject but the collectivity of the Church. The Priest of Ambricourt ultimately (though at many points tempted and deflected) refuses to view it as striking him as an individualised, isolated victim. Rather, he struggles to see his own suffering as an expression of, even a means toward, his extension of solidarity with others.

Solidarity is a central theme in Bernanos. For him the self comes to greater knowledge of itself through its ties with others. This is well illustrated in the Dialogues de Carmelites where the Prioress talks of the way we first see our own infirmities through others. Thus the knowledge that charity makes possible is essential to human solidarity. Bernanos does not see such solidarity merely as a matter of 'unlocking' the depths of the other. It is also a matter of perceiving oneself aright through the other. For example, the Prioress in the Dialogues des Carmelites says that 'it is first in others that we discover our own extreme sickness' (DC 39). She says that the person who, through a false charity, uncritically accepts the other's shortcomings 'does no more than break the mirror that he may not see himself in it' (DC 39). Charity towards others is a vehicle for accurate knowledge of the self. Without the solidarity with others that it makes possible, we are imprisoned in our narrow lives of half-truths, clichés and oversimplified ideas. Not only is our view of the world a confined one, but so is our understanding of ourselves. It is not through any penetration into an inner self that the diary enables the Priest of Ambricourt to come to terms with and understand himself; it is through its enabling him to be more fully perceptive in his encounters with others. In turn, those encounters lead him to a deeper understanding of himself and his mission. (This point can be illustrated further by referring



to the discussion, in the section on Bernanos and the Anti-Consolation thesis, of the self-compassion achieved by the Priest of Ambricourt through his dealings with the Comtesse and, in particular, his short friendship with Monsieur Olivier).

Some commentators claim that Bernanos' Journal d'un Cure de Campagne illustrates the doctrine of Vicarious Substitution. Vicarious Substitution is defined by Richard Griffiths as '...the suffering of one of God's creatures to expiate the sins of the others' (The Reactionary Revolution, London: Constable, 1966, 201). The usual elucidation of this doctrine involves a metaphysical exchange. Thus in the English novel Descent into Hell by Charles Williams we find Peter Stanhope assuming the fear that bedevils the life of Pauline Ansruther so that she may experience the joy of liberation. Here the emotional state of fear is supposed to be transferable by some metaphysical means from one individual to another. Commentators such as Ernest Beaumont apply this type of account to Bernanos:

The Dialogues des Carmelites illustrates how Blanche's fear of death is assumed by the old prioress who dies, not her own death, but, through the fear that she exhibits, Blanche's. As Soeur Constance says: 'We do not die each for ourselves, but each for another, or some even in the place of others'...(Georges Bernanos' in The Novelist as Philosopher, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, 39).

Beaumont claims that this form of metaphysical substitution also occurs in the Journal d'un Cure de Campagne. He points to what happens after the Priest of Ambricourt's confrontation with the Comtesse:

...(She) dies during the night that follows...(and)...is freed from the state of revolt in which the death of her infant son years before plunged her. The priest, though, has an inkling of the exchange that has taken place: 'The hope that was dying in my heart has reflowered in hers, the spirit of prayer which I thought I had irremediably lost God has given to her, who knows, perhaps in my name...(39).

Beaumont's justification for claiming that Bernanos here conceives of the doctrine of Vicarious Substitution as a matter of a metaphysical exchange is the fact that emotional states are somehow transferred from one character to another. But do we have to think of this as some kind of psychic transfer?

There is another way of understanding the transferability in question. The fact that the Priest of Ambricourt assumes the emotional states of others is indicative of his deep feeling for others and their plight. Thus, after the Comtesse's death he 'spent the first hours of this horrible day in a state very like rebellion'. 'In...mirrors I saw a face which seemed disfigured less by sorrow than by fear...' (J 151). Bernanos uses this image of transferability to express not the idea that emotional states can, like photons of light, travel through space and literally move from one person to another. Rather, if we have a deep enough feeling for another person then certainly we will assume some of their emotions. For example, parents can weep and become fearful when their sick child is distressed. The Priest of Ambricourt is one who so closely identifies with others in this way that he comes to share their griefs, fears and pains through pity. The French word pitie means both pity and compassion (though in what follows I shall use only the English term 'pity').

The Priest of Torcy expresses the power of pity alongside the common man's instinct to draw away from it:

...Pity is like an animal...The best of dogs can go mad. Pity is powerful and devouring... I don't know why we always think of it as something rather snivelling and silly. One of the strongest passions of men - that's what it is...(J 52).

For most people, too great an immersion in pity threatens their sense of self. One of the great ironies of the novel is that the strong, healthy Priest of Torcy, with his great knowledge of worldly affairs and yet sincere aspiration for sanctity, can only with distinct unease approach the strong passion of pity, even though he recognises its roots in the life

of Christ. Yet it is the weak, sickly, often inept Priest of Ambricourt who is able to handle it. In him, this outwardly unpromising, anaemic figure there grows the courage to overthrow the throes of a certain form of attachment to self and to live with this powerful, devouring thing that is pity, this thing that for Bernanos represents the very scourge of the worldly self.

The Priest of Ambricourt's capacity for genuine pity permeates the entire novel. He thinks of the old, atheist doctor with compassion: 'And I heard, or thought I heard, the groaning of so many men, their dry sobs, their sighs, the rattle of their grief, grief of our wretched humanity, pressed to earth, its fearsome murmurings' (J 146). He sees in the arrogant Comtesse who is wrecked by hatred of God, the pain and wretchedness of despair.

As I listened sadness overwhelmed me, indefinable sadness against which I felt quite powerless. That may have been the worst temptation in my life. But then God helped me. Suddenly I could feel a tear on my cheek, a single tear, as we see them on the faces of the dying, at the furthest limit of their griefs. She watched the tear fall (J 141).

In the above we see that in his pity for her he is tempted not to challenge her, to leave her view of things untouched. But then he recovers himself and persists with the confrontation, the struggle to expose the insufficiency of the hate that ruled her heart. His pity is expressed in the tear that runs down his face. The Comtesse, after years of arid hatred, at last sees before her someone with a genuine capacity to pity, to compassionately understand her grief. The depth of his pity also comes out when he later visits the family and sees her dead body.

Suddenly I saw her poor thin hands crossed on her breast, very slim, very delicate, far more truly dead than her face. I even saw a little mark, a scratch which I had noticed yesterday, as she pressed the medallion to her heart. The thin strip of lint

was still attached to it. I don't know why that broke my heart. The memory of her struggle before my eyes, that fight for eternal life from which she emerged exhausted...became painfully vivid, shattering...(J 154).

Notice here the attention to details of the particularity of the other person.

There is also the pity the Priest of Ambricourt feels for Torcy, for the latter's realisation of his own enmeshment in pride.

He was battling with himself, against another self, crushed a hundred times...still in rebellion...How deep the wound must have been ! He was as though tearing himself with his own hands...Trembling, he said no more. His eyes rested on me and I was ashamed of my little troubles; I could have kissed his hands...(J 51-52).

The Priest of Ambricourt's capacity to pity and to identify with others extends to all those he comes into contact with. Even those, such as his mean and suspicious housekeeper, who he experiences a natural dislike for.

It is the knowledge of distress and the capacity to pity that enable us to appreciate the character of Bernanos' conception of solidarity with others. We do not need to think in terms of a metaphysical transfer to appreciate this character. Consider the words of the Priest of Ambricourt, written in his diary:

True pain coming out of a man belongs primarily to God, it seems to me. I try and take it humbly to my heart, just as it is. And I endeavour to make it mine, to love it. I can understand all the hidden meaning in the expression which has become hackneyed now: to commune with. Because I really 'commune' with his pain (J 72). Here what we have is no psychic transfer of pain-states but an intense sense of being bound to others founded on an appreciation of distress and a capacity for pity.

At this a critic might ask: 'Just what good is pity? What difference can it make ?'.

For Bernanos, it does make a difference. In the Journal we find an illustration which goes some way to showing us the nature of that difference. Consider the example discussed above of the Priest of Ambricourt's meeting with the Comtesse. In seeing the tear running down his face she discerns his pity. She no longer finds before her one who is there to challenge her self for dominance. Rather, she finds a self with the capacity to be receptive to her distress.

Why should mere receptivity of this kind make a difference? Here we touch on something that relates to what the Wittgensteinian notion of the 'natural history of mankind'. Human beings simply do find a strength, and a capacity to readjust their lives, in recognising they have the pity of others. The Priest of Ambricourt himself, when near to death, shudders in the face of that death and says: 'God might possibly wish my death as some form of example to others. But I would rather have their pity...' (J 249). Pity here is a comfort against distress. The Priest wishes it for the alleviation of misery that it provides: in his humility he is uncertain of his own capacity - unsupported by the pity of others - to enable him to meet his own death.

It must be stressed that the pity Bernanos is seeking to show us is different from that secular notion of pity as a form of condescension towards the sufferer. That form of pity is inherently linked to one self's aspiration to dominate and suppress another. The Bernanosian concept of pity involves communion with another's pain. Underlying the Priest of Ambricourt's capacity for pity is his awareness of the distress infecting so many individuals. He sees that outside the Church '...distress is not shared, each creature is alone in his distress; it belongs only to him, like his face and his hands' (J 47).

Through pity, the solidarity fostered by the example of the saints who are imbued with the spirit of childhood, suffering should not be seen as striking at the separate individual, segregated into a discrete isolation. Suffering is a condition that afflicts the

Church, the collective of all individual selves, bound together in Charity, nurtured by the example of those saints who appreciate the misery and distress of life without God.

To summarise things thus far, we have explored Bernanos' view of suffering and found that his conception of the condition that underlies the sort of suffering occasioned by the experience of pointless evil is different from that underlying the Perspective-thesis and its idea of an 'independence of the world'.

For the Perspective-thesis the context in which pointless evil is faced is that of the isolated individual who has to align his will to the will of the world, to achieve independence of the world. The perspective sub specie aeternitatis determines the self's reactions so that they are not subject to the way events go in the world. The perspective ultimately ensures that the self maintains control over its own responses so that the world's intrusion is kept at bay. And this provides a form of consolation. For no matter what happens in the world, the perspective on the whole of life, life seen sub species aeternitatis, holds the prospects that the self will not be ultimately violated, no matter how severe are the afflictions it suffers.

Bernanos sees the context in which pointless suffering occurs differently. He has no place for the aspirations to control, whether that control be directed outwardly at the world or inwardly at the self's own reactions in order to avoid the onslaught of the world. The orientation towards control, an orientation of particular fascination to the modern world whose degree of detachment from the spirit of childhood is acute, merely intensifies the condition of distress and misery and binds the self ever deeper in turmoil. Recalling a quotation from the beginning of this section, the aspiration to control is part of the very condition in which the modern world (and proponents of the Perspective-thesis) see suffering.

All suffering is vain and intolerable for someone who lays the blame on the obstacle, like a child who beats with his fist an object on which he has hurt himself...(Quoted in BH 57).

Suffering is vain also if it is seen in terms of the Perspective-thesis, which is underlain by a fascination with control of the self to avoid external intrusions - that is what is epitomised in the urge for an independence from the world. For Bernanos an aspiration for such independence from the world is incompatible with the spirit of childhood and its capacity for pity and discernment of solidarity with others.

Let me now briefly give some indications of just how the Priest of Ambricourt's faith is irreducible to independence of the world. He neither aspires nor does he often have the natural capacity to control his responses. When he confronts the prospect of his death, having had the stomach pains which haunted him since coming to the parish diagnosed as terminal cancer, the Priest of Ambricourt writes:

(J)ust when I need most strength, the knowledge of my weakness so entirely overcomes me, that I loose the thread of my paltry courage, as a clumsy speaker loses the thread of his speech (J 236).

He confronts his death with terror:

However hard I try now, I know I shall never understand by what terrible mischance I was able...to forget the very name of God. I was alone, utterly alone, facing my death - and that death was a wiping out and nothing more...(J 233).

Later, when he gains at least some composure he still feels that his death will be as small and awkward as his life. There is here no grand disengagement from the world but a desperate attachment to it. Moreover, he feels no confidence at all that he will be able to be independent, in the sense of being aloof from, his impending fate.

My death is here. A death like any other...It is even certain that I shall be no better at dying than I am at controlling my life. I shall be just as clumsy and awkward...I don't want to be daring and defiant. My courage shall be to know that I have none, and as I am lacking in strength, I would now wish for my death to be a small one, no different from the other events of my life...(J 237).

The spirit of childhood is exemplified in the stance of a victim, a victim at the mercy of God's grace. When the self aspires for an independence of the world it no longer possesses the character of a victim. Vulnerability and weakness are the conditions of the manifestation of Christ. For Bernanos, the weakness of fickle Man is such that only weakness can 'reach' him. The Priest of Ambricourt is un-self-assured and vulnerable; he threatens no one. He does not appear as one self struggling for dominance over another. No one puts up their guard against him, he has no social prestige nor fluent manner to upstage anyone. His vulnerability enables him to achieve the capacity for genuine pity. Because he has no stake in the world of human hierarchies, hierarchies of individual popularity among men as much as of formal power, he is a barometer of what those in angoisse have to confront about their own lives. His presence makes them confront themselves in their ultimate weakness, confront the reality of the illusions they cherish and hide behind.

In conclusion, the view of suffering presupposed by the Perspective-thesis with its idea of an independence of the world is not intrinsic to self-renouncing belief. It is at best one possible conceptualisation of how suffering is understood in religious life. Moreover, it is one which Bernanos does not view as inherently self-renouncing.

### **3. Bernanos and the Anti-Consolation-Thesis**

The Anti-Consolation thesis as distilled in Chapter 1 maintains that self-renouncing belief in God is not held for any consolatory purpose(s). In this section I shall argue for the



following conclusions. Firstly, the Anti-Consolation thesis fails to give due regard to some contexts in religious life where some forms of consolation have a place. Secondly, the concept of consolation which the Anti-Consolation thesis presupposes is oversimplistic. Consolation is assumed to necessarily be some sort of gluttonous desire for what is distinctly and unambiguously self-directed. This involves the uncritical view that all forms of consolation involve a non-problematic split between what is an end-in-itself and what is an end-for-the-self. For Bernanos, some forms of consolation, principally related to the expression of some varieties of emotion, defy this sort of rigid division. The experience of them is actually an expression of the spirit of childhood.

Let us start with the first point, namely, the way the Anti-Consolation thesis fails to give adequate regard to the context in religious life where consolation has a place.

Bernanos saw the role of the Catholic writer as the 'perpetuelle recherche de l'être', which includes providing a portrayal of the place of evil in our lives (see J.C. Whitehouse, 'Teaching, Witness and Vision: Some Reflections on Bernanos' View of the Responsibilities of the Catholic Writer', Romantic Review 11, 1987, 99). In the Journal evil is found in the anguish and despair, the angoisse and the boredom that infects the parish, the desires of many characters (such as the Comtesse) for avoidance of meaningful contact with others, the lack of vocation in many of the clergy and their compromise with worldly standards of morality through sheer lack of interest in making any deep contact with others. The novel commences with reference to the Priest of Ambricourt's vocation to his parish. And in this there is a sense of foreboding. 'Mine is a parish like all the rest. They're all alike. Those of today, I mean' (J 5). In the very first paragraph we sense that something is wrong when the free-thinking comments of the Priest of Norenfontes arouse in other priests a sense of glee. In the Priest of Ambricourt they bring on 'such a deep sensation of stale discouragement that it almost brings tears to my eyes' (J 5).

My parish is bored stiff...Like so many others! We can see them being eaten by boredom, and we can't do anything about it. Someday perhaps we shall catch it - become aware of the cancerous growth within us. You can keep on going a long time with that in you...I stood there glumly watching (the parish) sink into the dusk, disappear...I had never been so horribly aware of my people's loneliness and mine (J 5).

He senses in the modern world a 'leprosy of boredom...a shameful form of despair like the fermentation of a Christianity in decay' (J 6). This condition has infected the notion of vocation in the priesthood itself.

Our superiors are no longer official optimists. Those who still profess the rule of hope, teach optimism only by force of habit, without believing in what they say. You need only raise the mildest objection and you find them wreathed in knowing deprecating smiles; they beg you to spare them (J 6).

The state of boredom is reinforced in the novel by the atmosphere of the dank, rain infiltrated open country and the almost endless roads the priest has to travel on his bicycle to visit his far flung parishioners. A central theme of the Journal d'un cure de campagne is of the struggle of the Priest of Ambricourt against such a despairing condition.

What is the root of this condition of boredom? It is the directedness towards self and the intensely modern capacity for sustaining an individual life devoid of all sense of the reality of others. For Bernanos, that condition of the self where there is no communion with others is the most penetrating form of evil. But such evil, and the associated despair, is something Bernanos thinks most people are in one sense unconscious of. This is not to say they are unaware that something is wrong. But in their self-orientation they have no real feeling for where the problem lies.

But for one endowed with the spirit of childhood the condition of despair becomes more pronounced and more directly felt. It is the saint, endowed with the spirit of childhood, who most clearly discerns the barriers to solidarity that the world erects. The saint discerns the impurity of human affairs and the way individuals utilise one another, far more deeply than the average person. Consequently, the saint faces a far greater burden than the worldly man. Moreover, one endowed with the spirit of childhood lacks worldly self-assurance and does not proudly believe that his or her own self is strong enough to withstand the penetrating temptation to despair and boredom that threatens it and others. The Priest's '...inner strength seems to melt away in floods of self-pity and tenderness and rising tears' as he comes to confront his inability to give practical expression to his desire to foster solidarity among those he meets (J 10).

The novel includes many accounts of the Priest of Ambricourt's despair.

...I knelt at the foot of my bed and prayed that Our Lord might bless my resolutions. Suddenly I was overwhelmed by a sense of destruction, a feeling that all the dreams, hopes and ambitions of my youth had been broken. I got into bed shivering with fever, and never slept until dawn (J 33).

Elsewhere he writes in his diary:

A terrible night. No sooner had I shut my eyes than desolation came upon me. I can find no other word to describe this indefinable exhaustion, as though my very soul were bleeding to death (J 76).

On another night he makes a furious effort to pray,

'...in a sheer transport of will which left me shuddering with anguish. Yet - nothing...A void was behind me. And in front a wall, a wall of darkness.... No hope of forcing or turning away the obstacle. Besides, there isn't any obstacle. Nothing...the night is entering into me by some inconceivable gap in my soul. I,

myself, am the night (J 91-92).

The first half of the Journal is filled with the Priest of Ambricourt's almost constant struggle against despair.

It is at this point that we discern one context in which some forms of consolation have a legitimate place in religious life. The spirit of childhood discerns the dark hopelessness which lack of solidarity with others and a self absorbed in its own interests to the exclusion of all else, ultimately brings about. As well as discernment, the spirit of childhood awaits in humility for, and aspires to, the consolations which God alone can provide through such intensification of solidarity with others; it knows that the self is unable to furnish them. Believing in God on the basis of hoped for consolation is, in this context, not only compatible with but is also indicative of the spirit of childhood itself.

To summarise this first conclusion, the Anti-Consolation thesis fails to give adequate regard to some contexts in religious life where consolation has a place.

It is important to emphasise one point. That Bernanos' conception of self-renouncing faith has a place for belief in God on the basis of consolations does not mean that all forms of consolation are religiously legitimate. Bernanos is not at all ignorant of the way some forms of seeking for consolation derives from spiritual gluttony.

The novel is replete with examples on this front. The Priest of Ambricourt felt himself, at one stage, caught up in this:

Once...(my praying)...had an obstinate, imploring quality...deep in my soul I could feel my soul in touch with God, sometimes imploring, then insistent, imperious even - yes, I would have liked to snatch His graces from Him, to storm His tenderness...(J 197).

There are also consolations derived from believing in God in order to secure a sense of one's own strength. The Priest also discerns he has fallen, at times, into this trap and had

to be purged of it: 'God, I presumed upon my strength. You cast me off into despair as we fling a scarce-born animal into the water, tiny and blind' (J 125). There are also consolations which produce spiritual complacency - belief in God is held as part of the secure and familiar life, the life where '...at the back of our minds the certainty that whensoever we wish we can return' (J 90). Another form of getting consolation from belief in God that is incompatible with the spirit of childhood is that in which the self gains strength from actively portraying itself as a victim of injustice. The Priest talks of those '...victims of iniquity who are able to find in that knowledge some basis of strength...' (J 247). But the Priest then writes humbly: '...I should always hate to think of myself - though unwittingly - the cause, or merely the pretext of another's sin' (J 247). For Bernanos, Christ did not hold Himself as a victim of injustice because that would have been an indirect way of attributing sin to others. Bernanos also extends this idea to cases of seeing the world as an intrusion into the self's individual autonomy when suffering is experienced. Thriving on this picture of the individual self as the victim is a way of dismantling the solidarity with others that the spirit of childhood aspires to, as we have seen in the section on Bernanos and the Perspective-thesis.

Turning now to the second line of argument noted at the beginning of this section. Consolation is not necessarily, as implied by the Anti-Consolation thesis, something gluttonously and straightforwardly self-directed. Indeed, we have already noted how the hope for consolation can be something other than a matter of self-orientation. We shall now explore how the experience of some forms of consolation is actually an expression of the spirit of childhood and, further, how the division 'for self/not for self' breaks down in such contexts.

In this connection the most important example is Bernanos' conception of joie (joy).

The Priest of Ambricourt writes in his journal: 'The mission of the Church is to discover lost joy' (J 230). Bernanosian joy is not what accompanies the worldly person's consumption of the things to be had from this world. Rather, it exemplifies the spirit of childhood in its delightful wonder at the realisation of the solidarity of the self with others. Joy is illustrated in some detail in the figure of Chantal in La Joie. Her spirit of tenderness and trust disturbs the other characters, provokes them to confide in her and exposes the futility and evasions in their lives. But Chantal's joy seems artificially infused into her and it is in the Journal that we find Bernanos' more mature concept of joy, a joy hard earned and reaped from much misery and pain.

After long periods of despair the Priest of Ambricourt comes to know that joy. Not long before his death he experiences friendship with the Comte's nephew, Olivier, before the latter's return to his regiment. Previously he had '...never dared to be young' (J 200), being unable to open his heart to others throughout his period at the seminary when he had to carry the shame of his background and his poverty. Bernanos describes one motorcycle trip which Olivier and the Priest make together. Previously he was 'never young because no one wanted to be young with me' (J 200). Now he realizes

...that youth is blessed - that it is a risk worth running, a risk that is also blessed.

And by a presentiment that I cannot explain, I also understood, I knew that God did not wish me to die without knowing something of that risk...(J 200).

The Comtesse, after her conversion by the Priest of Ambricourt, also comes to know joy. In the note she sends him before her death she writes:

What can I say to you? I have lived in the most horrible solitude, alone with the desperate memory of (my dead) child...I wonder what you have done to me...Or rather, I no longer ask myself. All's well. I didn't think one could ever possibly be resigned. And really this is not resignation! There is no resignation in me...I'm not

resigned, I'm happy...(J 150)

This is an indication of the joy to be had in faith as perceived by Bernanos. Her joy is passed, for a time, to him. 'I know that never before have I experienced, or shall again, hours of such fullness' (J 152). He recalls his earlier words to her.

"Be at peace", I told her. And she knelt to receive that peace. May she keep it for ever. It will be I that gave it to her. (J 154).

This is not pride in his own accomplishment, but a delight that he has been the vehicle for her confession and can share with her deeply in that, through the joy he feels.

Such joy is creative at the level of the Church as a community. Through it the members of the Church sustain each other. Bernanos sees such joy as akin to the joy of parenthood. This is particularly clear in the scene when the Priest sees the dead body of the Comtesse laid out in the coffin. He realises that self-renunciation is essentially a reaching out to others:

Lord, I am stripped bare of all things, as you alone can strip us bare, whose fearful care nothing escapes nor your terrible love! I lifted the muslin from her face, and stroked her high, pure forehead, full of silence. And poor as I am, an insignificant little priest, looking upon this woman only yesterday so far my superior in age, birth, fortune, intellect, I still knew - yes, knew - what fatherhood means (J 154-5).

For Bernanos the joy of fatherhood is, in its pure form, not something in which there is any tension of the form 'for self/not for self'. The Priest's joy is of this sort. Through it we discern his sense of communion with the Comtesse, despite their differences in rank and accomplishments, and his sense of wonder at their both being channels of the 'fearful care' and 'terrible love' of God.

For the Priest of Ambricourt such joy finally becomes the means to a form of compassion for himself. The wonder and awe at being himself the bearer of a love that

attracts others away from their absorption with self is something he learns about the utility of his lack of self-assurance and 'awkwardness' (maladresse). He can say : 'I have always known that I possessed the spirit of poverty' (J 237).

The Prioress in Dialogues de Carmelites says:

(N)ever despise yourself. It is very difficult to despise ourselves without offending God. Self-contempt leads straight to despair (DC 61)

Self-contempt leads to an angoisse which makes compassion for others impossible. At the end of the Journal the Priest of Ambricourt court can write:

The strange mistrust I had of myself, of my own being, has flown, I believe for ever...I am reconciled to myself, to the poor shell of me. How easy it is to hate oneself! True grace is to forget. Yet if pride could die in us, the supreme grace would be to love oneself in all simplicity - as one would love any one of those who themselves have suffered and loved in Christ (J 251).

Bernanosian joy makes possible a form of love where the 'self/not-self' division implied by the Anti-Consolation thesis is inapplicable. The spirit of childhood, when it attains joy, is able to love the self and to treasure it, just as it can love and reach out to others.

A further example of an emotion which defies the split between the simple 'for self/not for self' division is pitie (pity or compassion) which has already been discussed in the section on Bernanos and the Perspective-thesis.

The conclusions of this section are as follows. Firstly, the Anti-Consolation thesis fails to give adequate regard to some contexts in religious life where some forms of consolation have a place. When this context is more fully appreciated we recognise how some consolation is readily compatible with self-renunciation of the form Bernanos calls 'the spirit of childhood'. Secondly, the concept of consolation which the Anti-Consolation



thesis presupposes is oversimplistic. Some forms of consolation are associated with emotions found in the religious life (such as joie and pitié), emotions which are integrally linked to the concept of the spirit of childhood, and do not entail a non-problematic split between what is an end-in-itself and what is an end-for-the-self.

#### **4. Bernanos and the Absoluteness-Thesis**

According to the Absoluteness-thesis discussed in Chapter 1, self-renouncing adherence to God is absolute; it is discontinuous from all relative ends, ends which ultimately pertain to the self. In this section I argue that the Absoluteness-thesis is not intrinsic to Bernanos' model of self-renouncing faith. Indeed, on his view it is not inherently self-renouncing because the aspiration to hold belief in God as an end in itself can negate the spirit of childhood which forms the epitome of the Bernanosian form of self-renunciation.

Let us start with the words of the Abbe Menou-Segrais in Bernanos' Sous le soleil de Satan:

(E)ach one of us is alternatively borne towards the good, not by a thoughtful calculation of its advantages, but simply by a drive of the whole being, a pouring out of love, which turns suffering and renunciation into an object of desire...(or)...at other times tormented by a mysterious desire for self-degradation...an unfathomable hankering after evil...Evil, like good is loved for its own sake, and served too (SS 232-3).

The important point to note is that Bernanos is here making a point about two forms of orientations in which things are held as ends in themselves but which are not authentically religious. Loving evil as an end in itself is one example. Turning suffering and renunciation into objects of desire is another. Significantly, both these orientations are part of the same continuum of oscillation that characterises human nature untouched by grace.

It might be insisted that having renunciation as an object of desire - an end in itself - is surely authentically religious when this is done out of belief in God. But Bernanos came to oppose such a view. His opposition is expressed in the dissatisfaction he felt with the portrait of sanctity associated with the character Donissan of Sous le soleil de Satan and the way he felt the Priest of Ambricourt comprised a truer picture of self-renouncing faith.

In the earlier novel, Donissan, when told by his spiritual superior that 'When God awaits you, you must ascend, either that or lose yourself' (SS 111), sets about making himself a saint by will-power. In undertaking additional acts of devotion Donissan finds a sense of joy. This he treats with suspicion and seeks to root out with agonizing self-flagellation.

He was at that stage of paroxysm where disappointed love discovers new strength to destroy...he was punishing 'this body of death' from which the apostle prayed to be released, but then the temptation entered more deeply into his soul and he hated himself, completely. Like a man who cannot outlive his dream, he hated himself (SS 132).

That degree of disinterestedness that is the ultimate pinnacle of holding belief in God as an end in itself is unattainable. But in Donissan's assertive striving for such a state, the recognition of its unattainability brings self-hatred that threatens to seal him off from others.

An example of such extreme isolation from others is the case of the Comtesse, whom the Priest of Ambricourt confronts and converts. But in her initial move to accept such conversion she tries to substitute belief in God as an end in itself for what was formerly an end in her life, namely the memory of her dead son. That that was formerly such an absolute in her life is suggested by her self-sacrificing dedication to it. She says: 'Nothing, either in this world or the next, can separate us from what we've loved more than

ourselves, more than life, more than getting into heaven' (J 141).

Suppose that in this world or the next, somewhere there was a place where God doesn't exist: though I had to die a thousand deaths there...I'd take my boy to that place...(J 146).

In the novel we find that this absolute attachment has precluded her from any interest in any other human relationship. She has lived for years in a state of indifference towards her daughter and her husband. Her manner is cold, dismissive and curt. For Bernanos, her isolation from others is a manifestation of evil. Evil, for him, is that '...vast yearning for the void, for emptiness' (J 125).

After a long drawn out confrontation the Priest of Ambricourt brings her to a realisation of the insufficiency of her condition. She is finally brought to acknowledge God. But she is initially inspired to try to make her faith conform to the pattern of her apostasy, to make it involve a total rejection of all relative ends that pertain to the self and an attachment to faith in God as an end in itself. In a dramatic gesture that expresses this stance she throws the medallion containing some hair from her dead child into the fire and shouts: 'I'll either give Him all or nothing' (J 148). The Priest of Ambricourt condemns her daring:

Do you take God for an executioner ? God wants us to be merciful with ourselves..

And besides, our sorrows are not our own. He takes them on Himself, into His heart.

We have no right to...mock them, outrage them...(J 148).

The aspiration to disengage belief in God from all relative ends, such as those which pertain to the self's need for consolation in sorrow and through fidelity to attachments to other human beings, is neither required nor is it authentically religious.

The aspiration towards the capacity to hold belief in God as an end in itself, devoid of all relative ends pertaining to the self, can negate the spirit of childhood which forms the

epitomy of the Bernanosian form of self-renunciation. In the Journal d'un cure de campagne Bernanos is deliberately reacting against a portrait of virtue which emphasises the self's own capacity to attain a belief in God detached from all other, relative, ends. The novel contains an explicit resistance to the heroic view of virtue found in Paul Claudel.

The Priest of Ambricourt is presented as one who never presumes to think he has in himself the capacity to will belief in God as an end in itself. His sense of 'the powerlessness of us all' is what makes him so able to feel compassion for others. For example, in the face of death, he cannot resist the temptation to weep and to wish in desperation that his life were not to pass away.

My death is here. A death like any other...I shall be no better at dying than I am at controlling my life...My courage shall be to know that I have none, and as I am lacking in strength, I would now wish for my death to be a small one (J 237).

This is not the powerful saint who can throw aside concern for any relative ends and give himself absolutely to God. Bernanos' view of innocence derived from an awareness that an overemphasis on the ability to resist the need for any relative ends can lead to a reliance on the self's own strength which for him is incompatible with the innocence associated with the spirit of childhood.

The spirit of childhood is a mode of being that is characterised by the lack of worldly self-assurance. Bernanos wanted to show how aspiring to have one's belief in God to be something devoid of all concern for relative ends is indicative of a concern with the self's own accomplishments. As soon as renunciation is presented as a project which the self seeks to master and control then there arises an obstruction to a genuine solidarity with others. Such a self can so often, through involvement with its own projects and concerns, fail to detect the fragility and the needs of others. It can also fail to inspire in them the capacity to confess and identify to themselves their fragilities and weaknesses.

Self-renouncing faith, far from being an absolute in the way presupposed by the Absoluteness-thesis was seen by Bernanos as having an end. That end is a form of solidarity with others and with God. Bernanos sometimes talks of this solidarity as a form of joy. 'The mission of the Church', says the Cure d'Ambricourt, 'is to rediscover the source of lost joy' (J 230). This joy is seen as both a communal wholeness and an individual self-enrichment that cannot be detached from one another. That self-enrichment and communal wholeness is something which can be seen, at times, to be an end separable from belief in God. (More is said about Bernanos' view of joy in the section on the Anti-Consolation thesis).

We can summarise the findings of this section as follows. The Absoluteness-thesis is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith. Nor is it inherently self-renouncing. For the aspiration that one's faith be characterised by such total disinterestedness is, for Bernanos, incompatible with what is for him the paradigm of self-renouncing faith, namely, the spirit of childhood.

## **5. Bernanos and the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence Thesis**

In this section I shall argue that the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis is not intrinsic to the Bernanosian view of self-renouncing faith.

The spirit of childhood is the basis of Bernanos' view of self-renouncing faith. This has been argued in some detail in the introduction to this chapter, where the nature of this concept is outlined.

In the Journal we find that some forms of doubt are not necessarily incompatible with the Bernanosian idea of the spirit of childhood. The Priest of Ambricourt is overcome by doubt many times. For example, in the midst of one spell of the sort of despair described in the last section he also has to contend with the physical pains in his stomach:

My stomach pains have come back, fierce, intolerable. It needs an effort not to lie and roll about the floor, moaning like a sick beast. Only God knows what I am suffering. But does He know? (J 126).

The context of this passage suggests not merely a doubt about the omniscience of God but also one about His existence. The point to note in the latter example is that doubt does not affect the Priest of Ambricourt's stance as one endowed with the spirit of childhood.

We can account for the compatibility of doubt with the spirit of childhood. The spirit of childhood is characterised by a certain reticence with respect to the self's own abilities. It would seem that the very failing, which doubt in many religious contexts is held to be, is required in order to inculcate the self into an awareness of its own deficiencies.

The form of doubt that figures in the latter example is one which is at best transient and occurs during periods of angoisse or despair (as described in the last section). It is not, for example, a matter of intellectual doubt nor is it a failure to give one's allegiances to God. Rather, it is a psychological despondency which affects the self's sense of purpose in living and, consequently, of the orientation of its life to God.

From the above we can see that in Bernanos' model of self-renouncing faith, doubt is not always necessarily a matter of vice. At least one form of doubt is perfectly compatible with the spirit of childhood.

However, Bernanos offers us an illustration of a form of doubt which is incompatible with the spirit of childhood. This, in turn, also shows how the spirit of childhood, in resisting such doubt, is closely intertwined with virtue.

At one point in the diary the Priest of Ambricourt writes:

Purity is not imposed on us as though it were a kind of punishment, it is one of those mysterious but obvious conditions of that supernatural knowledge of ourselves in the Divine, which we speak of as faith. Impurity does not destroy this knowledge,

it slays our need of it. I no longer believe because I no longer wish to believe. You no longer wish to know yourself... We can only really possess what we desire, since complete and absolute possession does not exist for a human being (J 108-109).

The point we should first note here is the claim that purity, or virtue, is a condition of faith.

In saying that purity is a condition of faith Bernanos does not mean that purity is one out of a listing of possible necessary or sufficient conditions by which we can analyse the concept 'faith'. For within each category of necessary or sufficient conditions, each one is of more or less equal status. But Bernanos implies a closer relation between virtue and self-renouncing faith than that.

If Bernanos thinks the connection between virtue and faith is closer than the latter type of analysis would suggest, does he think in terms of an equivalence between them? No, because the fact that he talks of virtue as a condition of faith implies that there is no equivalence between purity (or virtue) and self-renouncing faith, as presupposed by the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis.

There is no equivalence between virtue (purity) and self-renouncing faith but there is a very close connection. How are we to understand this ?

For Bernanos' the 'spirit of childhood' is the ultimate form of self-renouncing faith and it is through this notion that we can understand the manner in which Bernanos connects virtue and self-renouncing faith. Bernanos does not conceive of the notion of the spirit of childhood according to a model centred on an absence of selfhood. Spirituality is not a matter of 'peeling' the self away to yield a void. The spirit of childhood is a form of being in the world, a stance towards others, which is at variance with assessing them in terms of what they can provide towards consolidating a proud self-assurance underlain by prudence. Moreover, as we have seen in the last sections, the spirit of childhood promotes a deep solidarity which binds the Church into a community. The self no longer confronts the world

as an isolated individual but as part of a cell within the body of the Church. Thus the Priest regards his parish not as a '...mere administrative fiction' but a 'reality', something which has eternal significance within the 'ever-lasting Church' (J 28). This is an expression of his deep sense of a bond to it. The bond is of a different order from that of an official who merely happens to have been posted to a particular locality. Further, we have also noted the emotional capacity of the spirit of childhood. It has a capacity for joie, for pitie and for a form of self-compassion or self-love which is founded on self-knowledge.

Bearing all the above in mind we can appreciate the connection between virtue and belief through this understanding of the spirit of childhood. Lacking worldly self-assurance, pride and prudence the spirit of childhood erects no barriers against what the worldly self sees as the self-curtailement imposed by belief in God. For Bernanos, self-renouncing belief is the condition of possession of the spirit of childhood. That is what he means when he talks of '...purity ...(as)...one of the...conditions of that supernatural knowledge of ourselves in the Divine' (J 108). Impurity consists of the cry of worldly self-assurance: 'I no longer wish to believe' (J 109). The Priest of Ambricourt holds that we can only possess what we desire. Worldly pride and self-assurance does not have the right emotional receptivity to nurture belief. Belief requires the simplicity of the spirit of childhood.

Belief, for Bernanos, is not ultimately about adhering to propositions. Doubt is misleadingly modelled when it is deemed to be a loss of belief. The Priest elsewhere writes that faith is not something one loses; 'one merely ceases to shape one's life by it'. The point is that doubt is ultimately, for Bernanos, a way of being in the world which is devoid of simplicity and saturated with pride and self-assurance. This form of selfhood is a barrier to faith.

To conclude, we have found that Bernanos' conception of self-renouncing faith does not have belief and virtue, nor doubt and vice, as equivalent. He does, however, have them



as very closely intertwined. The way we should understand the character of this close connection is through an appreciation of his conception of the spirit of childhood. The latter notion is not derived from a view of self-renunciation as a self-absence, a void of self. Consequently, it does not give rise to an equivalence thesis.

## **6. Bernanos and the Acceptance-Thesis**

The thesis that the self-renouncing believer's stance towards the world is one of acceptance of all things was outlined in Chapter 1. In this section I shall consider Bernanos' conception of self-renouncing faith in relation to each of the sub-theses of the Acceptance-thesis considered in Chapter 1.

### i. Acceptance of the Non-Centrality of Self

In Chapter 1 two facets of this thesis were highlighted. The first facet was the truth that the self is not at the centre of things. The second was that the self's insufficiency is such that it cannot set the parameters of meaningful discourse. There is nothing corresponding to this second facet in Bernanos' work.

Let us look at the theme that the self is not at the centre of things in Bernanos to see if there is any comparison.

The spirit of childhood which the Priest of Ambricourt possesses is characterised by one form of non-centrality of the self. The Priest's background is symbolic of this. He comes from the race of the very poor, the lowest social stratum, and has never had anything to defend in the concourse of human hierarchies and orders of prestige. In not having been raised in the tradition of possession he bears no grudge against the world that fails to deliver the privileges and status that others consider tempting.

I remain the son of very poor folk who never knew the strange...bitterness of the land-owning peasant towards the ungrateful soil itself, for eating up his strength...(J 33).

Thus Bernanos places the origins and outlook of his saint in a social setting of such poverty that it is wholly devoid of the aspiration to arouse worldly estimations of importance and centrality.

Also indicative of the Bernanosian emphasis on the non-centrality of the self is the stress on absence of pride. The Priest of Torcy attacks those preachers who take pride in their preaching:

"...(T)he priest who descends from the pulpit of Truth, with a mouth like a hen's vent, a little hot but pleased with himself, he's not been preaching: at best he's been purring like a tabby-cat..." (J 49).

Torcy discerns and expresses, in his usual blunt directness, the absence of such pride in his young colleague: "...you haven't that prosperous look of a special preacher at low mass"(J 50).

The Acceptance-thesis takes the emphasis on accepting the non-centrality of the self further than this. It extends it to accepting the self's dispensability in a universe it has not the capacity to physically triumph over and recognising that there is nothing in the ego which external circumstances could not destroy. Does Bernanos' conception of the spirit of childhood go this far?

One might be tempted to think so by the fact that the Priest of Ambricourt often sees his role as that of an instrument. In the intense confrontation with the Comtesse he says:

...I am everybody's servant...a thing to be used by everyone, or even less, if God so wills it...(J 127).

There follows his comparison with himself to the poker used by the Comtesse for stoking

the fire which, if God had '...endowed it with enough consciousness to put itself into your hands just whensoever you needed it, that would be more or less what I am for all of you...' (J 128).

However, this sense of dispensability should not lead us to take too seriously a comparison with the Acceptance-thesis' interpretation of the non-centrality of the self. This is suggested by the following considerations. Firstly, the context of the Priest's emphasis on his dispensability in the above quotation is in relation to his vocation in the Church. He stresses he is an instrument which his superiors can dispense with if his contribution to the Church's ministry is inadequate. This is far from a position which stresses the self's acceptance of its dispensability in the face of a hostile universe.

Secondly, the Priest of Ambricourt's reaction to the diagnosis that reveals he is dying of terminal cancer needs to be considered. He is taken aback and weeps, finally realising how much he has loved the world:

When I was a child I used to wake up in such tears. From what dream had I awakened now? Alas, I thought I was crossing the world almost without seeing, as one walks with downcast eyes in a glittering crowd, and sometimes I believed I despised it. But that was because I was ashamed of myself - not of life. I was like an unfortunate lover who loves without daring to say so, without even admitting it to himself...(J 234).

These are not the words of one who blindly accepts his dispensability in the face of the world's contingencies. Although he has pushed himself to the limit of endurance, visiting his parishioners when in acute pain, often having to cycle across miles of countryside, we also have to realise that his concern for his mission has meant he has not noticed the seriousness of his illness. But this is different from a stance of blind acceptance of the self's dispensability. In Dialogues des Carmelites a distinction is made between worldly pride,

which is 'but simple vainglory' and 'excess pride...(which is) more subtle and more dangerous' (DC 37). It is this latter pride which can stem from a form of humility in which, 'wishing to step down (one) may exceed the due measure' (DC 37). In the Priest of Ambricourt's spirit of childhood we find this aversion to excess humility which recklessly dispenses with the emotional aspects of selfhood and is ready to wallow in contemplation of its dispensability. The spirit of childhood is aloof from such a proud, grasping form of humility.

## ii. Acceptance of Pointless Suffering

It has already been argued in the section dealing with Bernanos in relation to the Perspective-thesis that Bernanos does not think in terms of an acceptance of suffering of the form posited by the idea of an 'independence of the world'. The spirit of childhood does not aspire to that. The Priest of Ambricourt writes in his diary:

...I have inherited from my mother, and no doubt from other poor women of our kind, a sort of endurance which...doesn't attempt to vie with pain, but slips within, makes of it a habit in some way: that is our strength...(J 221).

The endurance of the spirit of childhood is not one which sees suffering as a foreign intrusion into the self, seeks to compete with it so as to secure an heroic independence from it. Rather, the spirit of childhood 'slips within' suffering: suffering is a part of life and is not to be triumphed over. It is to be endured. Endurance is a different thing from the deflection of suffering secured by independence of the world - a deflection deriving from the desire that nothing can ultimately affect the self.

Bernanos sees suffering as endured in solidarity with the rest of the Church and with Christ and not as affecting the isolated subject. The Priest of Ambricourt comes to know that his place is at the side of Christ in His Agony in the Garden. God, too, suffers. The

Priest tells the Comtesse:

"(I)f our God were a pagan god or the god of intellectuals...He might fly to His remotest heaven...But you know that our God came to be among us. Shake your fist at Him, spit in His face, and finally crucify Him : what does it matter? My daughter, it's already been done to Him" (J 146).

The Priest of Ambricourt is impressed by the atheistic old doctor, Delbende, and his refusal to view his ruined practice and failing health as injustice: '...suffering is the natural condition of mankind' (J 70). In a purer Christian society, solidarity with others and the inspiration of the spirit of childhood would nullify to some degree the obsessive association of suffering with injustice found in modern society. However, Bernanos was aware that suffering can be intensified by both our situation in life and the sorts of expectation as regards what we think is due to us. He certainly does not demean the intensity of the suffering that many people have to confront. This will become clearer in the course of the discussion below.

Despite the above two dissimilarities with the Acceptance-thesis - the difference between endurance and independence of the world, and the solidarity in suffering - there is a point of connection between Bernanos and the Wittgensteinian position. Both are averse to viewing religious faith as something to be modelled on a reward in proportion to desert. The Priest of Ambricourt says: '(T)he Master whom we serve...shares (our life) with us. It would be far easier to satisfy a geometrical or moralistic God' (J 73). And the entire portrayal of the life of this priest is a testimony to how the spirit of childhood enables life to be lived without expectations and compensations.

Yet the latter similarity is tempered, in Bernanos, by an awareness of different forms of suffering which renders the Acceptance-thesis' outright dismissal of all theodicies as self-orientated, somewhat simplistic. The Priest of Ambricourt views the Comtesse's demand for

a reason for her son's death and her own misery as partly due to the selfishness instilled in the privileged classes by their lifestyle. Bernanos was aware that the urge for theodicies arises among the more fortunate classes in society out of a selfish inability to accept constraints to privileges thus far enjoyed. His message is that temporal security is a blessing and should be valued. It should not lead to an expectation for an account of every event that detracts from that security. Moreover, it should be valued as a basis for living in solidarity with one's family and not in a state in which the Comtesse and her daughter are strangers to each other (J 138).

Wasn't it rather a rare privilege to be born exempt from temporal servitude, which makes the lives of those who have nothing, a monotonous hunt for daily bread, an exhausting struggle with hunger and thirst, the insatiable belly demanding its pittance? Your house should be houses of prayer, of peace (J 137).

But for the poor, caught up in this exhausting struggle, there is nothing wrong with a theodicy or anything which offers them hope. They should not be deprived of something which

...consoles their loneliness; a dream of splendour, of magnificence, a poor man's dream - yet God blesses it! (J 138).

A hope of recompense need not be selfish for a sufferer lacking basic material needs. We can consider also an extract from the atheistic Dr Delbende's words to the Priest of Ambricourt, who listens intently, about how the villagers who pay him in kind exploit him:

"Well, you know, father, I lump 'em together with their exploiters, they're scarcely any better. They swindle me till its their turn to do some exploiting". He scratched his head, watching me round the corner of his eye without seeming to do so. And I saw how he blushed - that blush on his old face was rather beautiful. "But there's a difference between suffering injustice and having to submit to it - they submit. It

degrades them; I hate to see that...(J 70).

The spirit of childhood, here reflected in the old doctor, does not play down the submission that others have to make to suffering.

Like the Wittgensteinian position, the Journal d'un cure de campagne is sceptical about the usefulness of theodicies, even if it is loath to advocate their blanket dismissal as selfish. The Comtesse is converted not by the intellectual arguments of the Priest of Ambricourt but by his example of compassion. Similarly, the Priest of Ambricourt finds it useless to approach Dr Delbende's moral objection to Christianity, based on his view of the Church as having distorted Christ's understanding of poverty. He writes in his diary:

During the last two days I have been reproaching myself for not having answered this kind of indictment; and yet after much searching within myself I cannot see that I was wrong. Besides, what could I have said....(T)he only thing which would have sprung to my lips would have been powerful in one way, yet so weak in another that I have long been convinced of it, yet never really at peace. There is no Peace save in Jesus (J 73).

What he finds he can do is to strive for solidarity with the old doctor in his pain, to '...try to take (the pain) humbly to my heart, just as it is, (to)...endeavour to make it mine' (J 72).

### iii. Acceptance of the Finality of Death

A further facet of the Acceptance-thesis is that which stresses accepting the finality of death; death marks the termination of the self. Such acceptance is supposed to be self-renouncing in that it entails giving up the natural human desire for the self's continuance.

In the remainder of this sub-section I shall argue that this stress on accepting the finality of death is incompatible with Bernanos' conception of the spirit of childhood. Though the Priest of Ambricourt shows no hankering to survive death and forms no clear

view of what death entails, this is far from an acceptance of the finality of death.

Let us begin by considering a complexity about the concept of 'eternal life' in Bernanos. After his conversion of the Comtesse, he looks back at the incident after learning of her subsequent death:

The memory of her struggle before my eyes, that fight for eternal life from which she emerged exhausted victorious, became painfully vivid...How could I know that such a day would have no tomorrow, that she and I had faced each other on the very verge of the visible world, over the gulf of All Light? Why could we not have crossed together? "Be at peace", I told her. And she knelt to receive this peace. May she keep it forever. It will be I that gave it to her. Oh, miracle, thus to be able to give what we do not possess, sweet miracle of our empty hands...(J 154).

Here we learn that the Comtesse's struggle for eternal life was victorious. The priest had witnessed her victory before his eyes. She has received eternal life before the Priest of Ambricourt or anyone else knew she was going to die. Therefore it seems clear that 'eternal life' here is not a matter of unending life. What eternal life means is the life of solidarity with others that the Church aspires to mediate, as elucidated in previous sections.

Does not this mean that accepting the finality of death is intrinsic to self-renouncing faith as conceived by Bernanos? Far from it. The fact that eternal life is to be found in this present life does not mean it is confined to this life.

The Priest of Ambricourt, endowed with the spirit of childhood, looks back to the scene in which he and the Comtesse had finally been reconciled. Death, the 'Gulf of All Light' as he calls it, has now separated them. But in his genuine love and pitie for her he wants that peace which she finally achieved, that peace mediated through him, a sickly, insignificant priest, to be with her for ever. He wants it to survive the gulf, the frightening disconnection from all earthly attachments that death is perceived to be. The point here is



that the character of his stance towards the world does not think in terms of finality.

It could be objected that his wish that the peace he gave her will be with her 'for ever' is a mere form of poetic expression. In reply, we can see it is more than this when we consider the Priest of Ambricourt's attitude to his own death when he realises he is to die. His response is totally different from one of acceptance of finality.

The spirit of childhood does not have in itself the confidence in its own strength to be able to aspire to detach itself from all the bonds of solidarity with others that holding out death as a finality entails. Considering his imminent death the Priest writes:

It has just occurred to me how my agony was that of a cruel, sudden disappointment. What I had believed was so far away...stood out before me. My death is here...It is even certain that I shall be no better at dying than I am at controlling my life. I shall be just as clumsy and awkward (J 237).

A few pages later he writes: 'Nothing is farther removed from me than stoic indifference, so how can I hope for the death of a stoic?' (J 249). The spirit of childhood cannot aspire to such stoic indifference. 'I can understand how a man, sure of himself and his courage, might wish to make of his death a perfect end...(but)...my death will be what it can be, and nothing more' (J 249). He realises his part is not to be '...daring and defiant' (J 237). The point in these latter two quotations is that the Priest of Ambricourt is not a man sure of himself. He is not sure enough of himself and his own powers to aspire to accepting death as a 'perfect end', as a complete termination.

Further, it is integral to the spirit of childhood and the character of its bonds in solidarity to others that he cannot aspire to coldlessly embrace finality. For he writes:

...to a true lover, the halting confession of his beloved is more dear than the most beautiful poem. And when you come to think of it, such a comparison should offend no one, for human agony is beyond all an act of love (J 249).

The point here is that the confession of his attachments to others in this life (finally achieved after the struggle and despair which characterises most of the novel except the final sections) means he cannot aspire to put them aside and seek out the aspiration to accept the finality of death. Because of those attachments, and the fact that death will as a result be ever more one of 'agony', it is integral to his love that he endure that. For 'human agony is beyond all an act of love'. What he finally realises is that he does love the world: 'I was crossing the world without seeing...like an unfortunate lover...without even admitting it to (myself)' (J 234).

Experiencing the agony of being unable to accept finality while yet having to face death - death as the disconnection from all that he finally realises he loves - is integral to the nature of his love. The Priest dies having finally come to love himself and the world - he does not die having achieved an independence of the world (as posited by the Perspective- thesis). The nature of his attachments defy analysis in terms of the Wittgensteinian idea of 'independence of the world' (as already discussed in the section on Bernanos and the Perspective-thesis).

A further reason that Bernanos' view of self-renouncing faith does not incorporate an acceptance of the finality of death is that he is suspicious of its spiritual value. His characterisation of the spirit of childhood involves a deep sense of solidarity with others. Evil is the opposite of that solidarity. Evil is, in the words of the Priest of Ambricourt, '...that vast yearning for the void' (J 125). The Comtesse is portrayed as one who, as a result of suffering, has been reduced to a terrible concentration of self. She has become indifferent to her family, to other people and to God, and clings desperately to the memory of her dead son in a way that, as the Priest shows her, is actually an infidelity to that memory. Her love of what is in essence her self-created image of her dead child is but a form of obsessive self-orientation that is a cancerous growth preventing any enduring

solidarity for both the self and the Church. And the underlying decay of her marriage is as much due to her as to the sexual infidelities of her husband that her indifference has chosen to overlook. In her indifference she desires a place where she can be free of all her family, including God, and left alone with the image of her departed son. The Priest of Ambricourt sees this as a yearning for the finality of all attachments to this world. Such a stance towards the world is self-orientated, not self-renouncing.

It might be assumed from the above discussion that the Bernanosian idea of the spirit of childhood expects to survive death. This would be too imprecise a way of putting it. The spirit of childhood does not positively aspire to such survival. The point is that it does not accept finality - its stance towards the world is distorted if we think of it as something endowed with such a confident, defiant grasp of things in the face of death.

To summarise, the spirit of childhood as exemplified in the Priest of Ambricourt does not involve an acceptance of the finality of death for three reasons. Firstly, it does not aspire to have the capacity for such a defiant, confident acceptance. Secondly, the character of its love and attachments to this world needs to be properly appreciated. In the case of the Priest of Ambricourt we see that experiencing the agony of being unable to accept finality while yet having to face death - death as the disconnection from all that he finally realises he loves - is integral to the nature of his love. Thirdly, Bernanos' has no means of distinguishing the acceptance of the finality of death from his view of Evil as a yearning for the void.

#### iv. Acceptance Without Seeking Manipulation

In Chapter 1 three facets of the Acceptance-thesis' aversion to manipulating events was discussed. Firstly, the recognition that God's power is not to be understood as akin to physical power, able to vie with other physical powers, to overcome them and so effect a

change in the order of things in the world. Secondly, that petitionary prayer is not about effecting changes in the world.

Let us begin with the first point. The best way to understand Bernanos' conception of the power of God in the Journal is to understand the nature of the strength of the Priest of Ambricourt, a strength that is present through his powerlessness. This is not to say that God's power and the Priest's strength are in every way comparable. The Priest, for example, can talk of his own impracticality and also his 'wretched weakness' in his inability as a leader (J 122). Now it makes little sense to talk of God as impractical or as a poor leader.

Nevertheless, there is a sense connected with the character of the spirit of childhood in which the Priest's strength-in-weakness is illustrative of God's power. Bernanos intended the Priest of Ambricourt's spirit of poverty to be linked to God's revelation in Christ. At one point in the novel the Priest realises that he is '...never to be torn from that eternal place - that I remain the prisoner of His Agony in the Garden' (J 174). Bernanos intended the Priest's strength-in-weakness to be a portrayal of Christ's power.

In the Journal the revelation of Christ is contrasted with worldly expectation. Torcy says that the poor were '...expecting something different. They were hoping for the end of their distress' (J 50). How are we to understand the strength-in-weakness of the Priest of Ambricourt? This has already been touched upon in the discussion on the power of pitie (see the section on Bernanos and the Perspective-thesis) but some restatement and elaboration is appropriate here. The Priest of Ambricourt, not long before his death, comes to realise that his strength is '...the strength of weaklings and of children'. One place in the novel where the meaning of this is made clearer is in a speech by Torcy to the Priest of Ambricourt. Torcy attacks those social reformers who think the Christian goal is the eradication of poverty. For among the poor, just as among the rich, the fascination for worldly power has as great a hold: '...the scallywag vomiting up his drink in the gutter is

perhaps drunk with the very same dreams as Caesar asleep under his purple canopy' (J 56).

To such reformers his message is:

...you'd do better to look at yourselves in the mirror of want, for poverty is the image of your own fundamental illusion. Poverty is the emptiness in your hearts and in your hands...(J 56)

Torcy is not saying that social deprivation is not to be countered. What he is attacking is the equating of poverty with social deprivation. Poverty is the 'emptiness in your hearts and in your hands'. Poverty is the emptiness which cannot be ultimately filled by those whose '...law of life is debit and credit' (J 56). Bringing to bear the powerful resources of this world will not cure poverty as conceived of by Bernanos.

How then is this poverty to be cured? Torcy elsewhere talks of the power of pitie. In worldly terms pitie is often thought of as something snivelling and silly, whereas in reality it is something powerful and devouring. In the Priest of Ambricourt's confrontation with the Comtesse we see something of this pitie when he identifies with the suffering that has led to her sin of hating everyone including God:

As I listened sadness overwhelmed me, indefinable sadness against which I felt quite powerless...Suddenly I could feel a tear on my cheek, a single tear, as we see on the faces of the dying, at the furthest limit of their grief. She watched this tear fall (J 141).

It is to this awkward, impractical, sickly and simple priest that the Comtesse, who had '...lived for many years in that horrible quietness of the desolate, which of all forms of despair is the most atrocious, the most incurable, the least human...' (J 144), makes her confession.

The very weakness of the Priest of Ambricourt becomes the source of his strength in converting the Comtesse. His pitie (pity/compassion) is nonjudgemental and humble. She

is from a prosperous background, used to social encounters in which one faction is seeking social dominance over another. But the Priest of Ambricourt is one from outside the entire tradition of aspiring to enhanced social standing or fluency in command of human beings. He is seeking no competitive advantage. And this makes it easier for her to confess. A point made in Rousseau's Confession makes this clearer:

As soon as we get into the habit of measuring ourselves against each other, and moving outside of ourselves in order to be sure of getting the first and best place, then it is impossible not to dislike everything that surpasses us, everything that makes us smaller, everything that hems us in...(quoted in Paul Zweig, The Heresy of Self-Love: A Study of Subversive Individualism, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, 153).

The point here is that there is something about the psychological make-up of the self-orientated subject that makes it resist that which it perceives as a competitor.

This helps us see the relevance of the Priest of Ambricourt's non-judgmental approach and his refusal to blame the Comtesse. In fact he excuses her:

"Oh, madame, nobody can see in advance what one bad thought may have as its consequence. Evil thoughts are like good ones; thousands may be scattered by the wind, or overgrown or dried up by the sun. Only one takes root. The seeds of good and evil are everywhere...(H)idden sins poison the air which others breath...(H)ow closely we are bound to one another in good and evil...(J 142).

This passage reinforces the picture of humanity as bound to one another in solidarity. But it is the fact of the Priest of Ambricourt's poverty, in the sense outlined above by Torcy, that effects the first step for the Comtesse's confession

Let me reiterate Bernanos' view of the idea of strength-in-weakness. The point is that God conceived of as a supernatural power, stronger than all earthly powers, would be

irrelevant to a conversion, to a change in the heart of Man, such as is effected in the Comtesse. The challenge she throws to such a God is the following: 'God's broken me already. What more can He do?...I no longer fear Him' (J 139). For Bernanos, only the 'power' of the spirit of poverty (which is equated to the spirit of childhood (J 237)) can overpower the most crippling forms of despair.

It is worth pointing out that Bernanos does not think the exercise of such 'power' as exemplified in the spirit of poverty is at all a rare phenomena. He believed that its manifestation percolates and supports a great deal of human life. This is well illustrated in his portrayal of the working class concubine of Dufrety, the former seminary acquaintance of the Priest of Ambricourt, who has abandoned the priesthood in order to 'find himself'. He masquerades as a writer but really lives off the money of his hard working lover who nurses him in his illness. The Priest of Ambricourt discerns in her, despite her lack of formal contact with the Church, the spirit of poverty:

(H)er voice...I know it well, and it awakens in me so many memories: the ageless voice, the voice both brave and resigned, which soothes drunkards, scolds naughty brats, lulls naked babes, argues with relentless tradesmen, beseeches bailiffs, comforts the dying - the voice of the working woman which goes on through time...the voice which holds out against all the miseries of the world (J 244).

Contrary to the Acceptance-thesis, Bernanos thinks that the power exemplified in the spirit of poverty, which is illustrative of God's power, does vie with worldly power. Bernanos seems to imply a number of ways in which it does this. Firstly, as in the case of the 'voice of the working woman' mentioned in the last quotation, it does so by making possible certain settled patterns of human life by controlling drunkards, soothing children or the dying, and curbing the zeal of bailiffs anxious for the repossession of property. These kinds of interventions in the world are capable of redirecting or deflecting the activities of

worldly forms of power which are centred, in Torcy's words, on 'debits and credits'. Secondly, the spirit of poverty shows to the confident men of the world the 'mirror of want', their own 'fundamental illusion' and the 'emptiness in your hearts' (J 56). For Bernanos, self-orientation ultimately can only lead to emptiness, to a void. It is the spirit of poverty that points to a sense of our solidarity with others and enables the grace of God to be channelled. And it is only to this form of power, this non-competitive power-in-weakness, that the human psyche is ultimately receptive.

To summarise thus far we can note the way Bernanos does have a place for the idea of God, and of the spirit of poverty, as competing with worldly forms of power. The spirit of poverty does effect changes in the world and it does affect the constitution of the world. It is far from a matter of accepting everything and leaving the world as it is.

Do any of these changes allow us to say that, contrary to the Acceptance-thesis, self-renouncing faith can actually include the attempted manipulation of events? Let us consider Bernanos' view of petitionary prayer. I think that Bernanos' conception of the spirit of childhood is such that the fact of seeking to change things in the world through prayer does not nullify it. The Priest of Ambricourt prays for many things. He prays repeatedly for the strength of personality to make an impact on his parish. He has a plan for his parish, which includes setting up a youth club for the young people so as to draw them into the Christian life. Thus the mere fact that a person prays for things to come about need not, provided that the things prayed for are not solely for the self's gratification, annul the authenticity of that person's faith

When his prayers are not answered, when the things prayed for do not materialise, the Priest of Ambricourt does not cease living the Christian life. 'What I had hoped for did not come to me' (J 91). Sometimes he sees in himself the fault: 'I wanted to have God to myself. He did not come' (J 91). Thus the spirit of childhood is not incompatible with



asking for things to occur in the world, but it quietly displays '...a sort of endurance, which in the long run is almost unlimited...' (J 221) when prayer is not answered.

Despite the above qualification there is a clear similarity between prayer in the Journal and petitionary prayer as presented by the Wittgensteinian position.

Despite all his praying, what the Priest of Ambricourt runs up against is a wall of silence. The diary is something he takes up because he feels he is making no progress in prayer. The diary eventually becomes his prayer: it is in the self-analysis achieved through it that he - near the end of his life - sees that awkward and impractical though he is, he actually possesses the spirit of poverty. At one point in the novel he actually says: '(P)rayer is just that way of crying' (J 195). And the Journal is really a novel of self-discovery. It is the story of a young priest who has to confront the weaknesses in himself that prevent the materialisation of the dream he has for the development of his parish, a cell in the body of the Universal Church. In addition to this, it is a novel in which the diarist comes to realise that his weakness is paradoxically the kernel of his strength. The things he hated most about himself he comes to see as those which testify to the spirit of childhood, the spirit of poverty. All this accords well with the Wittgensteinian view of prayer as linked to self-understanding.

To varying extents there are connections between Bernanos' view of self-renouncing faith and the four facets of the Acceptance-thesis. However, there are also real divergences. Therefore, the Acceptance-thesis as a whole, understood as the acceptance of all things as in the Wittgensteinian position, is not found to be intrinsic to self-renouncing faith in Bernanos.

## 7. Bernanos and the Anti-Justification Thesis

It will be recalled from the discussion in Chapter 1 that the Anti-Justification thesis entails that belief in God is self-orientated when it involves a contrast between the world that we are part of and another realm beneath, behind, beyond or to come later. Self-renouncing faith, supposedly, is a faith able to accept the vicissitudes of this world without requiring resort to the security of positing a metaphysical realm or Being. It can accept what D.Z. Phillips calls the 'inherent pointlessness in things'. And a faith which is unable to accept things without bringing in the metaphysical is a faith that is self-orientated. Is such a conception implied in Bernanos' view of self-renouncing faith?

As we have seen in previous sections of this chapter, there are several concepts which have traditionally been assumed to involve a metaphysical dimension which in Bernanos are not straightforwardly linked to metaphysics. Thus the concept 'eternal life' was found not to be essentially about life of unlimited duration but about a life in solidarity with others. A further example centres on my rejection of the idea of the application to Bernanos of the idea of vicarious substitution as a matter of the metaphysical transfer of emotional states. Finally there is Bernanos' interpretation of the doctrine of hell. Hell, the Priest of Ambricourt tells the Comtesse, is not to be understood as '...penal servitude for eternity' (J 139). Such a view is the product of a society and an attitude which sees things in terms of what is most to its convenience. '(M)oralists, even philosophers refuse to see anything but the criminal, they recreate evil in the image and likeness of humanity; they form no idea of essential evil, that vast yearning for the void' (J 125). Thus they fail to see, in a way that the spirit of childhood can see, that the criminal is often only a victim crushed by fate.

How little we know of what a human life is - even our own. To judge us by what we call our actions is probably as futile as to judge us by our dreams (J 76).

But to see in this way is inconvenient for the those who cling to worldly standards. They find it easier to label such individuals 'enemies of society' and spare themselves the trouble of understanding them (J 140). But for the spirit of childhood, hell is not some convenient realm which serves to comfort those in authority in this world, to make them feel at ease by giving Divine approval to their convenient labelling of unfortunates they cannot be bothered with. Hell, says the Priest of Ambricourt, is '...not to love anymore' (J 140), the state in which there is an absolute incapacity to respond to others.

The above constitute only limited examples. I now wish to argue that Bernanos does not have any reason for implying that there is a necessary link between bringing in metaphysical dimensions and the urge for self-security and self-orientation?

The reason for this is conceptually connected to the concept of the 'spirit of childhood' as it occurs in his thought. For the notion of the 'spirit of childhood' is in Bernanos something quite compatible with many forms of consolation for the self. As we have seen in the section on the Anti-Consolation thesis, despair that affects Man, and especially the saint, is often so intense that the hope provided by consolation is what the self directs itself to in order to maintain an orientation towards God and the spiritual life. Indeed it is indicative of the spirit of childhood that it regards itself at the mercy of God's grace to provide it with the consolation it needs, but cannot of itself provide or muster, to remain faithful to the religious life. Similarly, in the section on the Acceptance-thesis dealing with the acceptance of suffering it was noted that for those who are poor and without hope then the spirit of childhood does not begrudge them the consolation of a 'dream of splendour' to make their suffering a little less intolerable. I think Bernanos would extend this to the idea of a metaphysical realm, even where that is brought in to provide consolation.

The above point needs qualification. Bernanos would not allow that all consolation is compatible with self-renouncing faith. As we have seen in the discussion of the

Acceptance-thesis on suffering, there is a tendency among the privileged sections of society to seek a theodicy as soon as there is any sign that their privileged way of life is felt to be affected. The Comtesse, for example, is an individual who believes in a metaphysical God, and carries out the religious devotions of the Church, in order to spite such a God. Hers is a form of self-orientation that requires a metaphysical God. That is to say, her self-affirming and spiteful rejection of God is only intelligible in terms of the conception of a God that belongs to another realm, looking into, but unaffected by, what goes on in this one. Here, recourse to the metaphysical is an expression of self-orientation.

There is another sense than that of providing legitimate consolation for the 'poor in spirit' that the metaphysical can have in self-renouncing faith. As discussed previously in relation to the issue of the finality of death, not ruling out a continuation of the self after death is an expression of the nature of the attachment the spirit of childhood has to the claims and relationships of this world. For the spirit of childhood does not dismiss all the claims of this world outright, as has been previously argued. The nature of its attachments to this world is sometimes expressed in a form of valuing them that involves not consigning them to a final temporal cessation. Bernanos does not see accepting finality as self-renouncing. He sees it as seeking the void of emptiness, something human beings in despair can yearn for as offering a vision (in fact an illusory one) of consolation. But it is consolation only to the aloof self wishing to reject the claims of solidarity with others.

What about the idea of God as metaphysical? Is this necessarily something that involves a sense of a bond to something which promotes self-security? For Bernanos the idea of God as metaphysical is not primarily that of a mechanistic controller from on high. Sister Constance in Dialogue des Carmelites says:

(I)t does seem to me to be less sad not to believe in Him at all, than to believe that He is some sort of mechanic, geometer or doctor...God is not a mechanic, a

schoolmaster with his cane, nor a judge with his scales. If He were, then we should have to believe that He will take counsel of what are called solemn, levelheaded sensible people, and that is a silly idea...(P)eople of that kind have always thought the saints were mad...(DC 64).

As we have seen, Bernanos stresses that the essential act of God in intervening in the world is not with thunderbolts and displays of worldly power. It is in suffering. The God that Christians worships is a God that has assumed human form and has suffered. The power of God affects us not by physical coercion but by penetrating our psychological condition and calling forth our sympathies, addressing our natural condition of seeking out bonds of solidarity with others. Bernanos presents, in effect, a challenge to the simplistic conception of a metaphysical controller presupposed by the Anti-Justification thesis. For Bernanos, God is not metaphysical in the sense of being in charge of a vast array of levers nor because He is an excellent computer programmer. The influence of God is felt in the world and changes its constitution all the same. It operates in the way that the spirit of childhood effects change in the world.

Finally, the Anti-Justification thesis holds that there is something inherently self-renouncing about a faith which has no sense of a bond to anything metaphysical, a faith which is able to accept the 'inherent pointlessness in things'. How does Bernanos stand in relation to this facet of the Anti-Justification thesis? Bernanos offers us a model of faith in which this is questioned. The spirit of childhood is characterised by its capacity to be 'bonded' to others, including a metaphysical God conceived of as above. The spirit of childhood does not have a stance towards the world of accepting pointlessness. Its nature is orientated to finding and displaying, or calling forth, in others a certain sense of there being a point in things. It provides testimony to the strength and the reality of solidarity with others and the need to abandon the view of the self as discrete, unattached and

struggling in isolation.

We may conclude as follows. The Anti-Justification thesis involves the idea that an orientation to the metaphysical affects the nature of faith and renders it automatically incompatible with self-renunciation. An examination of the work of Bernanos enables us to see that this thesis is oversimplistic and inaccurate. Some forms of orientation to the world do invoke the metaphysical dimension in such ways as to consolidate self-orientation. Such cases are not examples of self-renouncing faith. However, the spirit of childhood is a concept that is in no way incompatible with metaphysical dimensions in religion. Therefore, for Bernanos, the Anti-Justification thesis is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith.

## **8. Bernanos and the Passivity-Implication**

In Chapter 1 we noted an important implication of the Perspective-thesis and of the Unreflectiveness-thesis, namely the passivity implied of the religious believer. This passivity involves the way the self is subsumed under the categories given it by the perspective on life which religious belief is supposed to be. Such subsumption implies the unreality of the self. I shall argue in this section that Bernanos' conception of self-renouncing faith is at variance with the Passivity-Implication and does not view this thesis as intrinsic to self-renouncing faith.

There is one sense in which Bernanos does see self-renouncing faith as something which we, ultimately, can only passively receive. Bernanos says:

Our Church is the Church of the saints...To become a saint what bishop would not give away his ring, his mitre and his crozier; what cardinal his purple; what pope his white robe, his chamberlains, his Swiss Guard and all his worldly power? (Jeanne relapse et sainte, Paris: Plon, 1934, 61. My translation).

Sainthood, the ultimate in self-renouncing faith, cannot be obtained just by striving for it. This is conceptually connected to the idea of the 'spirit of childhood' which is corrupted when the self strives and begins to consider its success the result of its own effort.

However, the above is not the full sense of passivity implied by the Passivity-Implication. The latter implies subsumption under the conceptual categories provided by the perspective on life and, ultimately, the unreality of the self. Let us consider each of these two closely connected facets with respect to Bernanos.

Does Bernanos imply subsumption of the self under conceptual categories provided by religious belief? The nearest Bernanos comes to implying this is in his view that a Christian response is only possible if one has a certain manner of contact with the categories of thought provided by a Christian society. In the novel Nouvelle histoire de Mouchette Bernanos gives us a portrait of a girl who has the natural sensibility of one who possesses the spirit of childhood. Like the Priest of Ambricourt, Mouchette is from the lowest stratum of the peasantry and a family of alcoholics. Their wretchedness is powerfully shown in the scene in which her mother dies. The mother, Bernanos tells us in his usual deep awareness of the destructive effects of material deprivation

...bore the whole weight of their poverty...whose sudden flashes of temper, which frightened even her drunken husband, were somehow their voice and their silence, their tireless watching and taciturnity, the symbol of their shared misery...(NHM 77).

In her natural innocence Mouchette despises no one (NHM 30); she shows respect and affection to characters that others find repulsive. Her capacity for self-giving is deep and contrasts with that of the other inhabitants of her small world

Yet Mouchette does not have access to the conceptual categories which are the precondition for the sustaining of a Christian society. In this novel Bernanos provides a picture of a society where the virtues of love, of loyalty, of trust, and of compassion have

no place. Consequently, Mouchette's natural simplicity and trust have no opportunity to flourish into the spirit of childhood. For in that society she is despised as a poor outcast by the other children. Then, raped by Arsene after having put her trust in him and shown him companionship, she is further mocked and rejected by the villagers. Mouchette comes face to face with her terrible solitude: '...alone now, completely alone, against everyone' (NHM 85). This aloneness is without any sense of God. Mouchette commits suicide. There is nothing in her society which will enable bonds of solidarity with others to develop. The concept 'God' has no place in such a 'form of life'; the tragedy is that it is unable to inform her self-understanding and so relieve her from her plight.

None of this implies the subsumption of the self as in the Passivity-Implication. What Bernanos is stressing, rather, is that the absence of certain concepts in a society will mean that certain reactions, certain practices, certain forms of relationship and forms of relating to others will be either radically different or not exist at all. This latter point does not imply that in a Christian society the self is adequately portrayed as subsumed in certain conceptual categories.

Against the Passivity-Implication's inadequate attention to the reality of the self, we find in Bernanos the opposite emphasis. Firstly, the spirit of childhood does not involve an absence of self but a certain form of selfhood, the nature of which I have tried to sketch in this chapter's introduction.

Secondly, the Bernanosian stress on self-valuation has already been noted but is worth re-emphasising here. The Prioress in Dialogues de Carmelites says:

The saints did not...revolt against themselves, for revolt is always of the devil. Above all never despise yourself. It is very difficult to despise ourselves without offending God. Self-contempt leads straight to despair (DC 61)



Self-contempt leads to an angoisse which makes compassion for others impossible. At the end of his journal, the Priest of Ambricourt can say: 'How easy it is to hate oneself...if pride could die in us, the supreme grace would be to love oneself in all simplicity' (J 251). We can understand this in terms of Bernanos' stress on the underlying bonds we have with one another. A proper form of self-love is essential to the maintenance of such solidarity. For in us others come to perceive themselves aright. Thus the prioress in the Dialogues des Carmelites says that it is '...in others that we discover our own extreme sickness' (DC 39). She says that the person who, through a false charity, uncritically accepts the other's shortcomings '...does no more than break the mirror that he may not see himself in it' (DC 39). The self is a mirror to others to detect themselves. Any distortion, either by falsely elevating the other or by demeaning the self, weakens the ties that bind us together.

To conclude we can say that the Bernanosian model of self-renouncing faith does not include the Passivity-Implication as intrinsic to self-renouncing faith.

## 9. Conclusions

The Bernanosian model of self-renouncing faith as characterised by the 'spirit of childhood' is a fundamentally different model from that of the Wittgensteinian position, as outlined in Chapter 1.

(1) There is no Absoluteness-thesis in Bernanos. The Absoluteness-thesis is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith. Nor is it inherently self-renouncing. For the aspiration that one's faith be characterised by such total disinterestedness is, for Bernanos, incompatible with what is for him the paradigm of self-renouncing faith, namely, the spirit of childhood.

(2) The Anti-Consolation thesis is not intrinsic to Bernanos' view of self-renouncing faith. Firstly, the Anti-Consolation thesis fails to give adequate regard to some contexts in religious life where some forms of consolation have a place. When this is more fully

appreciated we recognise how some consolation is readily compatible with self-renunciation of the form Bernanos calls 'the spirit of childhood'. Secondly, the concept of consolation which the Anti-Consolation thesis presupposes is oversimplistic. Some forms of consolation are associated with emotions found in the religious life (such as joie and pitié), emotions which are integrally linked to the concept of the spirit of childhood, and do not entail a non-problematic split between what is an end-in-itself and what is an end-for-the-self.

(3) The Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence-thesis is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith in Bernanos. Although Bernanos does talk of purity as a condition of faith - the spirit of childhood is a condition of a full receptivity to God - this is less than a matter of equivalence between belief and virtue.

(4) The Perspective-thesis is neither intrinsic to self-renouncing faith nor inherently self-renouncing, in Bernanos. For him suffering is not something that should be seen as confronting the isolated individual, who then seeks to control its responses to achieve an independence of the world. The spirit of childhood is incompatible with that.

(5) The Passivity-Implication is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith in Bernanos. His conception of such faith does not imply a passivity in which self is subsumed by the conceptual categories of a perspective on life which is unreflectively adhered to. Bernanos does stress that the absence of certain concepts in a society will mean that certain reactions are not possible, for example the exercise of specifically Christian virtues, as was shown with reference to the late novel Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette. However, this is not at all a matter of the self being subsumed by a perspective on life, in the sense implied by the Wittgensteinian position. A further point is that Bernanos does not imply any corresponding sense of the unreality of the self. To the converse, he stresses a form of self-valuation. For in his view the self is real and to be valued - it is in us that others come to know themselves, as it is in others that we also come to know ourselves. Self-valuation and the

reality of the self is an integral part of Bernanos' conception of the solidarity of the human race, a solidarity which the Church has a unique role in bearing witness to.

(6) There are, at best, only minor similarities between some facets of the Acceptance-thesis and Bernanos:

- (a) There is an emphasis in Bernanos on the non-centrality of the self. However, it does not extend to accepting the self's dispensability as in the Acceptance-thesis.
- (b) With respect to the acceptance of pointless suffering Bernanos rejects any thought of suffering as something to be deflected by attaining an independence of the world. Suffering is to be endured in solidarity with the Church. There is, though, a parallel in that reward is not to be expected in proportion to desert. Bernanos is particularly suspicious of the privileged sections of society, those who lack no material wants, seeking explanations for their suffering. Though he does not rule out the value of a 'dream of splendour' which some theodicies may provide for the really poor and oppressed.
- (c) There is no idea of accepting the finality of death in Bernanos. The spirit of childhood is incompatible with such an idea. It does not seek confidence in its own strength to be able to aspire to detach itself from all the bonds of solidarity with others that is involved in viewing death as a termination of self. Further, the Priest of Ambricourt's attachment to others precludes embracing finality. Finally, in Bernanos' thought the acceptance of finality is indistinguishable from the evil urge to embrace the void.

- (d) Accepting events without seeking to manipulate their course is partially paralleled in Bernanos. Thus the notion of the power of God is shown in the Priest of Ambricourt's weakness which, in not presenting itself as a competitor and in manifesting pitié, is able to reach the poor in spirit. God's power is like this in that the notion of God as a 'Superman', with infinite power is religiously irrelevant since it cannot effect real conversion in the heart of Man. Where Bernanos differs from the Acceptance-thesis on this point is that he allows that divine power does effect a change in the constitution of the world.

Therefore, the Acceptance-thesis as a whole, understood as the acceptance of all things as in the Wittgensteinian position, is not found to be intrinsic to self-renouncing faith in Bernanos.

(7) The Anti-Justification thesis is not intrinsic to self-renouncing faith in Bernanos. He does not imply that metaphysical elements in faith automatically renders that a matter of self-orientation. Firstly, the spirit of childhood is quite compatible with believing on the basis of anticipated consolation in some contexts. Secondly, he has a view of God as metaphysical which is more subtle than that of a simplistic idea of a kind of mechanic or a puller of levers, even though it is a God somehow beyond the world. Thirdly, the idea of aspiring to a bond to a metaphysical God is quite in keeping with the spirit of childhood, which is essentially a conception in which the (non-individualistic, non-solipsistic) self outreaches to others, including a metaphysical God.

There is a different structure to the Bernanosian view of self-renouncing faith, as compared with that of the Wittgensteinian position. As was discussed in Chapter 1, the latter model starts with the Absoluteness-thesis; the other theses are built, hierarchically, on that. The Bernanosian model does not have an Absoluteness-thesis, nor (barring minor similarities

noted above) the other theses that are built upon it. What it does have is the concept of the 'spirit of childhood'. It is that which provides the kernel to understanding the nature of the Bernanosian conception of self-renouncing faith.

## CHAPTER 4: PATRICK WHITE'S CONCEPTION OF SELF-RENOUNCING FAITH

### 1. Introduction

Patrick White (1912-1990) was an Australian novelist and Nobel Prize Winner. From his early writings onwards, his themes have had to do with the search for God and the struggle to overcome the self. The influence of Simone Weil is evident in some elements of his work.

In this chapter I shall offer my own interpretation of White's concept of self-renunciation. Essentially, White sees self-renunciation as the capacity to detach oneself from infatuation with one's own self and the process of self-cultivation, and, in a cruel and meaningless universe, to achieve a certain form of compassion, characterised by a love of all men.

In section 3 I shall examine White's criticism of the aspiration to achieve a view of things sub specie aeternitatis and his denial of such a view as inherently self-renouncing. In section 4 I shall explore White's rejection of the self-cultivation that revolves around an infatuation with trying to transform the self so that it satisfies one's particular desired self-image. White sees both these forms of self-cultivation as a barrier to the form of compassion he sees as integral to the nature of self-renunciation.

### 2. White and the Acceptance-Thesis

In Patrick White's novels we come across an Acceptance-thesis which is very close to that associated with the Wittgensteinian position and which sees this as intrinsic to the concept of self-renunciation. Although this theme of acceptance permeates all of White's novels, perhaps its most startling and clear expression is to be found in the novel Voss, which will stand at the centre of the discussion in this section.

### i. Acceptance of the Non-Centrality of Self

One facet of accepting the non-centrality of the self noted in Chapter 1 is that of accepting that the self cannot set the parameters of meaningful discourse. This has no parallel in White's work. Therefore we can turn to looking at other dimensions of accepting the self's non-centrality.

Johann Ulrich Voss is a nineteenth century German explorer who leads an expedition into the heart of the Australian continent. A man of pride in his own power, he has only contempt for expressions of human feelings and weaknesses. He intends his conquest of the desert to be a grand act in celebration of his own abilities.

Voss believes that his triumph over the desert could be paralleled by a psychological self-completeness. Despite the heat and the endlessness of the desert, Voss sought to pass through it by will. His will was to be the instrument through which inclination to give up, to seek out physical and psychological comfort, was to be set aside. Moreover, his will was to submerge not only his own inclinations and fears but also those of others. The other members of the expedition he considered '...weak men...all but one (the Christian, Palfreyman), who had surrendered his strength conveniently to selflessness' (V 24). Through integrating his natural aversions with his will Voss wants to attain completeness, to be God over both others and his own self. As the expedition progresses, Voss is brought to experience the utter hopelessness of all human effort. He comes to acknowledge that Man, '...when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so'. Before he is finally killed by aborigines he has come to have a deep love of his fellow men and to recognise, in a parallel way to the Acceptance-thesis, the dispensability of the self. (The nature of White's conception of dispensability emerges more clearly in the sub-section below on accepting the finality of death).

White takes the emphasis on the centrality of the self to consist largely in the self's belief in its own sufficiency. Voss believes early on that '...no man is strong who depends on others' (V 148). 'I detest humility. Is man so ignoble that he must lie in the dust, like worms. If this is repentance, sin is less ugly' (V 161). How religious believers '... merge themselves with the concept of their God, he considered almost with disgust' (V 52).

Reference is made to the '...material world which (Voss') egoism had made him reject' (V 39). This is the world of human solidarity, the world in which '...men and women sat at a round table and broke bread'. Voss believes he does not need that solidarity nor the support and admiration of others that accompanies it. He believes that compassion limits will (V 227). Voss '...had no more need for sentimental admiration than he had for love. He was complete' (V 45). Or at any rate he believes himself to be 'sufficient in himself' (V 17) but there are hints of a crack in his completeness when he first meets Laura Trevelyan, another character who has early aspirations to self-sufficiency (V 12) which are linked with religious doubts. 'But I too am self-sufficient, she remembers, with some lingering repugnance for her dead prayers' (V 95). Laura comes to overcome her self-sufficient leanings and is the instrument of Voss' eventual salvation.

To summarise, we can say that there is an obvious parallel with the Acceptance-thesis in that White stresses that self-renunciation involves accepting that the self is not at the centre of things, and in the way this brings him to stress accepting the ultimate dispensability of the self.

## ii. Acceptance of Pointless Suffering

The second element of the Acceptance-thesis highlighted in Chapter 1 is the acceptance of pointless suffering. This involves not aspiring for any compensation from the scheme of things for suffering endured.



White saw the acceptance of suffering as a vital element in spiritual progression. An epigraph to an early novel, Happy Valley, is taken from Mahatma Gandhi: 'Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone...the purer is the suffering, the greater is the progress'. David Marr, a biographer of White, says that White himself saw the acceptance of suffering as a means to overcome what he most disliked about himself: pride (Patrick White: A Life, Australia: Randon House, 1991, 312). White once wrote that '...the state of simplicity and humility is the only desirable one for artist or man' ('The Prodigal Son', Australian Letters 1, 1958, 39). Simplicity and humility are found in a form of understanding and self-knowledge in which Man stands acquiescent to the course of events in the world.

One contrast in the novel that illustrates this point more fully is that between Voss and Palfreyman, another expedition member. Palfreyman balances two devotions, one to science, one to religion and he builds between them a bridge supported by a cult of usefulness to others. So much so that the '...two banks of his life were reconciled...and it was seldom noticed that a strong current flowed between them'. Palfreyman does not seek to have his faith provide access to modes of prediction and control such as found in his science. In fact his devotion to science is not a matter of wanting to dominate nature but to experience a sense of wonderment at all things. In this double devotion Palfreyman has a strength that Voss' dominating presence cannot intimidate. The discovery of a strange insect is enough to make him spontaneously forget what Voss, in his towering and wilful presence, is saying to him.

Voss, in a bid to eliminate any contrary stance to his own, wants to have it that Palfreyman's faith proceeds from inadequacy rather than assurance. He sends Palfreyman to his death in order to prove to the other expedition members that, in the end, faith will not support a man. Contrary to Voss' expectations, Palfreyman's faith does not collapse. In

the moments before his death when he sees the aboriginals, he confronts his own weakness and assesses the failure of a faith that should give him support at such a moments of crisis.

If his faith had been strong enough he would have known what to do, but he was frightened, and now could think of nothing, except, he could honestly say, that he did love all men, he showed the natives the palms of his hands (V 365).

Palfreyman recognises that he has no power to influence the scheme of things so that he can avoid a painful death. He has access to no great system of teaching that tells him how he is to act nor assures him of any reward. It is his very acceptance of his weakness and impending suffering that is the sign that his faith remains unviolated.

In contrast to this, Voss is, for most of the novel, one who seeks to deny even to himself his vulnerability. White traces that vulnerability to Voss' origins. Voss has had to flee the simple and suffocating world of his native German town and the restricting love of his parents.

The vulnerability in Voss makes him take up stances of apparent strength and indifference, to dominate others and attempt the impossible conquest of the desert, in order to hold at bay the weakness he knows, but fears to recognise as his. The essential theme of the novel is that of how such a man, through the saint-like intercession of Laura Trevelyan, comes to a state of humility and acceptance of the scheme of things. The one survivor of the expedition recounts that Voss, at the end '...would wash the sores of the men...would sit up all night with them when they were sick, and clean up their filth with his own hands (V 473). This old man in his confusion has conflated the story of Voss' death with that of Palfreyman. Yet White intends us to see that ultimately such an identification is not inappropriate, as Voss finally attains Palfreyman's state of self-renunciation.

Like the Acceptance-thesis, White's stress on accepting suffering extends to psychological suffering. Laura Trevelyan's nun-like life at the end of the novel is one in

which she has to contend with the debilitating judgement of the world. White highlights the sacrifices that renunciation often has in terms of society's exclusion of anyone who does not share its canons of what makes for a full personal life. Laura's renunciation of self leads her to adopt the illegitimate daughter of her servant who dies after childbirth. Marriage to Laura thus becomes impractical in the Australian middle class world she inhabits. The episode in which Laura meets a past acquaintance, Una McCallister, highlights this:

'Why, Laura, fancy meeting you. Mamma understood from Mrs Bonner that you had renounced the world' ...If Mrs McCallister laughed too long, it was because she had always disliked Laura, and Laura had lost in the game of life. Now was the moment for Una to produce her husband, which Una did, as further evidence of her triumph... (V 437).

Laura bears this 'judgment of the world' (V 436) without giving in to the pain of psychological hurt.

Palfreyman's endurance of an encroaching despair is a further example. He has left his deformed sister, who keeps house for her clergyman uncle, after her attempted suicide. What haunts Palfreyman is his inability to rescue her from her delusion that her deformity renders her unacceptable to God and his abandonment of her, after her attempted suicide, to undertake the journey to Australia. Voss, in his vindictive desire to expose Palfreyman's weaknesses tells him: 'Her intention was glorious, but you rushed and tied a tourniquet, when all you had to offer was your own delusion...Then....you left for the Antipodes...retreated further and further from your failures, until we are sitting beneath this tree, surrounded by hazards, certainly, but of a most impersonal kind'. But Palfreyman's faith refuses despair. 'You cannot destroy me, Mr Voss...I think I have realised all this...And that I did not have the strength to endure it. And must make amends' (V 282). Palfreyman does not seek to dispel despair; he realises, having sought to run away from it

once, that all there is left to do is to endure it.

Like the Acceptance-thesis, White stresses not only accepting suffering but also accepting without seeking to find any wholesale explanation of it. Laura, Voss' spiritual guide, has arrived at this state before him: '...Laura's faith in reason was already less. She would prepare her mind to receive revelation...'. In other words, her standpoint is one of receptivity to whatever comes, not one of seeking to deduce a purpose in what happens and then, as a distinct step, deciding whether to believe in God. A further example of the way White's view of self-renunciation incorporates this aspect of the Acceptance-thesis can be found in the section of this chapter dealing with the Perspective-thesis. There, in the example of Ellen Roxburgh, we find a character whose renunciation of self is incompatible with seeking any explanatory scheme to explain suffering. The universe she encounters is one of pointless suffering. The intensity of her self-renunciation shows itself through her acceptance of this.

### iii. Acceptance of the Finality of Death

A fourth element of the Acceptance-thesis singled out in Chapter 1 was the acceptance that there is no continuance of our personalities after death. In Patrick White's vision of the world, as in the Acceptance-thesis, wanting to survive death is seen as a selfish desire to perpetuate the self. Voss finally comes to see that his desire for dominance and control is worthless. He is killed by his own aboriginal servant and merges with the rocks and the dryness of the desert. There is no survival of such dissolution. Voss learns, finally, that a man makes his life out of 'daily existence', of the love of all humanity, rather than the 'infinite'. There is nothing further, beyond recognising this, that the pilgrimage through life can lead to. Moreover, an extended duration of self can add nothing to this fundamental realisation.

All this is well illustrated in Laura's experience at the funeral of her maid, Rose Portion. Laura's aunt, with her middle class domestic values, suffers '...less in sorrow for her dead servant, than from the presence, the very weight of Death...recalling the different illnesses that had carried off her relatives and friends...' (V 250). Aunt Emmy tries '...desperately to cling to some comfort of the parson's words' (V 251). The mourners '...surrendered up their faces to the fear of anonymity' (V 251). But Laura saw clearest that '...her days of joy had been, in a sense, illusory' (V 251). Laura finds it

...exhilarating to know that terrestrial safety is not assured, and that solid earth does eventually swirl beneath the feet. Then, when the wind had cut the last shred of flesh from the girl's bones...she began to experience a shrill happiness...(V 251)

Laura experiences a sense of happiness in the realisation that she can accept her eventual annihilation. Such a joy is only to be had by those who can detach themselves from the cares of self. And Laura finds she can do so only momentarily. Soon, the self intrudes:

...Yet, such was their weakness, her bones continued to crave earthly love, to hold his skull against the hollow where her heart had been (V 251).

Her love for Voss is not yet wholly spiritual and for God alone. It is still enmeshed in self. It is only '...in the final crumbling, when love would enter into love, becoming an endlessness, blowing at last...indistinguishable, over the brown earth' (251) that she can hope for the capacity to love without the deflection of the self.

Accepting the finality of death is also reflected in the prose poems which highlight Le Mesurier's spiritual progression as the expedition advances increasingly deeper into the interior of the continent.

My blood will water the earth and make it green. Winds will carry legends of smoke; birds that have picked the eyes for visions will drop their secrets in the crevices of rock; and trees will spring up, to celebrate the godhead with their blue

leaves (V 316).

The reference to 'legends of smoke' seems to be an anticipation of being killed by the aborigines who would cook the flesh and eat it. Further on in the poem there is an image of the kangaroo the natives kill:

They chase this kangaroo, and when they have cut off its pride, and gnawed his charred bones, they honour him in ochre on a wall. Where is his spirit? They say: It has gone out, it has gone away, it is everywhere (V 316).

As in the case of Laura, White stresses that the realisation which Le Mesurier has attained is a form of love. In the poem the speaker calls out: 'Now that I am nothing, I am, and love is the simplest of all tongues' (V 316).

For White, the cessation of the self is a prerequisite for this form of spiritual love, a love realised only momentarily before the self is extinguished. White is known to have been influenced by Simone Weil, who wrote

I never allowed myself to think of a future state, but I always believed that the instant of death is the centre and object of life (Waiting on God, trans. E. Craufurd, London: Routledge, 1959, 29).

For White the instant is all there is; renouncing the self cannot involve any thought of anything more.

#### iv. Accepting Without Seeking to Manipulate Events

There are further parallels between White and the facet of the Acceptance-thesis that stresses accepting what comes without seeking to change or manipulate things in the world.

Palfreyman is described as '...not a man to act...but a sufferer of life' (V 208). As we have seen, this comes out clearly in his acceptance of death before his murder by the natives.

If his faith had been strong enough he would have known what to do, but he was frightened, and now could think of nothing, except, he could honestly say, that he did love all men, he showed the natives the palms of his hands...

He displays no aspiration to influence the course of events to try to avoid a painful death. He has learned to accept all things.

The knowledge through which Man does not seek to control the forces of this world, but to humbly accept whatever course they lead him towards is explicitly referred to by Laura. She denies that knowledge comes from traversing the blank spaces on maps; it 'overflows all maps' and 'only comes from death by torture in the country of the mind'. Le Mesurier reinforces this in another part of the novel when he says understanding the mystery of life comes not '..by success, which is an end in itself, but in failure'. Voss is finally killed by aborigines. Before his death he has come to have a deep love of his fellow men and to have given up his obsession with strength and domination which was reflected in the desire to conquer the desert.

White seems to have a comparable concept of the 'power' of God to that of the Wittgensteinian position. In Le Mesurier's poem, a foreboding of his death, he contrasts the love of God which is dawning in his heart with the power of the aboriginal killing implements:

So they take me, when the fires are lit, and the smell of smoke and ash rises above  
the smell of dust. The spears of failure are eating my liver, as the ant-men wait to  
perform their little rites (V 316).

The contrast which the poem is presenting is that between the love of God, which the victim here attains to a high degree, and the 'spears of failure'. The power of destruction afforded by the instruments of death is really only an illusory power. 'As I become weaker, so I shall become strong' (V 316). To one with such an understanding, '...love is the simplest of all

tongues' (V 316).

As the expedition progresses, Voss finds himself increasingly having to hold out against the power of such a love:

There remained his will, and that was a royal instrument. Once during the night she came to him, and held his head in her hands, but he would not look at her...So a mother holds against her breast the head of a child that has been dreaming, but fails to take the dream to herself...So Laura remained powerless in the man's dream (V 317).

Laura has now begun to reach him as he sleeps. The love she stands for encroaches upon his tenacious avarice for worldly power. In the above passage she fails to 'take the dream' - the illusory comfort offered by worldly power - to herself. But in the end it is her power, the power of love for all men, that triumphs.

White's conception of prayer to God is also directly parallel to that of the Wittgensteinian position. Prayer as a form of seeking relief from the vicissitudes of this world is something White has only contempt for. This is clear from his allusion to the prayer of Mrs Bonner. In the scene where the coloured servant, Rose Porten, is giving birth, White mockingly details the middle class mentality's concern that the carpets should not be stained with any blood.

(K)ind Mrs Pringle had carried off their daughter Belle for as long as circumstances required...Mrs Bonner had been reading a sermon, and just now was offering a prayer, for the poor sufferer, which signified: herself' (V 245).

Here prayer of intercession is a matter of seeking comfort. Contrast this with the prayer of Le Mesurier in his poem: 'O God, my God, I pray that you will take my spirit...and grant that it shall be everywhere, and in the rocks, and in the empty waterholes, and in true love of all men, and in you, O God, at last' (V 316). This is not an appeal for something to



come about but an expression of a certain form of realisation about the self and its capacity to relate to a certain form of love, the love of God.

### 3. White and the Perspective-Thesis

As outlined in Chapter 1 the term Perspective-thesis is understood in the following way. There is such a thing as a 'perspective', a way of seeing the whole of existence sub specie aeternitatis in which the self is 'absent' and things and events are no longer judged in terms of what they contribute to the self's sense of security and wellbeing. Pointless evil can be endured because the self is independent of the world. Such independence of the world and its vicissitudes is supposed to be inherently self-renouncing. It is also supposed to be intrinsic to self-renouncing faith.

In this section I shall try to show two things. Firstly, how White, in his novel The Eye of the Storm, shows that the attitude of independence from contingencies encapsulated in the Perspective-thesis is not inherently self-renouncing but can co-exist with at least one form of self-centred view of the world. Secondly, I shall claim that White shows us that the Perspective-thesis does not mark anything intrinsic to a self-renouncing orientation to the world. His conception of self-renunciation, which lacks any perspective on life as a whole, will be illustrated by reference to another of his novels, A Fringe of Leaves.

#### I

The central character in The Eye of the Storm is Elizabeth Hunter. Although bedridden and elderly, her wilfulness dominates the lives of her remaining family and servants. Now near death, her life is a cycle of sleep, recollection of the past and occasional periods of lucidity. She is still torn between a longing to detach herself from the continuing presence of her

self-orientated and lustful past and an attachment to the memory of that same sensuality and utilisation of others.

Mary de Santis who ministers to Elizabeth Hunter sees love as '...a supernatural state to which I must give myself entirely, and be used up...till I am nothing' (ES 157). Increasingly Elizabeth Hunter purports to strive for this 'other love': "Oh, I know I am not selfless enough...There is this other love I know. Haven't I been shown? And I still cannot reach it. But I shall! I shall!" (ES 157). In her illness she arrogantly refuses sleeping tablets: '...I have an idea that I am not mine - to do what I want with' (ES 164).

This idea of an 'other love' is linked to her attempt to re-live her experience of a perspective on the whole of life which she glimpses whilst alone in a storm on a distant island off the Queensland coast. In that view of the totality she becomes '...no longer a body...(but)...a flaw in the centre of the jewel of light: the jewel of light itself existed only by grace...' (ES 409). In the eye of the storm she is '...released from...all contingencies' (ES 413).

She lay and submitted to someone to whom she had never been introduced...the linesman testing for the highest pitch of awfulness the human spirit can endure. Not death. For yourself there is no question of dying (ES 408-9).

Here Elizabeth Hunter is not denying the fact of death. Rather her vision of the whole of life is able to live in spite of the sense of its impending presence. She is able to accept the prospect of her annihilation as she cowers in a bunker, the wind and spray tearing the island's buildings and trees: '...to be received into the sand along with other deliquescent flesh...' (ES 410). She is released from a dependency on the contingencies that make for a continuation of her self. Years later, lying on her sick-bed, Elizabeth Hunter still claims to be able to be near to grasping again that view of life as a whole. She believes she can '...taste everything there is to taste and not ...refuse what is unpleasant' (ES 351). That is,

she is willing to accept the ugliness and the pain in the world, as well as the beauty and, more pertinently, to see in the unpleasantness a necessary beauty. She even believes that, '...the desire to possess had left her' (ES 401).

The significant point to be found in White's novel is the way he exposes the egotism in Elizabeth Hunter's attempt to grasp the perspective on the whole of life, the way he shows it is anything but authentically self-renouncing.

The role of the perspective on life seen sub specie aeternitatis in Elizabeth Hunter's life is to reinforce her self-sufficiency and self-centredness. She is fascinated by '...the mystery of her elect life...' (ES 401) and thinks herself set apart from the fate of ordinary people, even if outwardly she is subjected to suffering and death.

The consequence of Elizabeth Hunter's vision of the beauty of the world as seen in the eye of the storm experience is the sustaining of her self-centred, exploitative posture in her relations with others. When nursing her dying husband she is accused by some of being cold. But she rejects this possibility and believes herself '...involved in a mystery so immense and so rarely experienced...' (ES 198). This sense of the profundity of her own perspective on everything makes her unaware of her husband's dying cry of agony: 'Whyyy'. This is symptomatic of her obliviousness to the needs of others. When she lends her glamorous and wealthy presence to others it is because they '...lend themselves to one's own self-mortification' (ES 160). Similarly, she justifies her lack of love for her children by claiming to pursue a purer, more spiritual love. Her daughter's accusations of cruelty are rejected because Elizabeth sees herself as a visionary, one who only hurts others by acquainting them with truths about themselves they will not acknowledge.

In so far as she grasps the comprehensive vision from the eye of the storm, Elizabeth Hunter remains indifferent to the judgemental versions of her constructed by others. But that is only because she is indifferent to others' fundamental selves anyway. Only their

superficial selves, the selves they present in ordinary social encounter, matter to her. And they matter only because their awed unease is what gives her outrageous and elegant presence its opportunity to captivate or ignore. In her death-bed recollections, Elizabeth Hunter recalls how as a child she had longed for possessions, principally dolls. Later, these were replaced by people. She longed to possess people who would obey and love her. Her magnetic personality and natural beauty assured her of this aspiration. But in return she used them for her self-centred purposes.

White's uncompromising dissection of human self-centredness exposes the seeking of aspiration to self-security behind the desire to see in terms of a single, unified and seamless whole. Such desire constitutes an attempt at a subsumption of everything into one seamless and satisfying harmony. It is a harmony that can assimilate, even mitigate, the force of the experience of pointless evil.

The idea of a perspective on the whole of life is thus very capable of being a device that promotes both consolation and a sense of self-sufficiency. It is an attempt to articulate a fundamental relation of the self to world. In so doing, it instills in the self the consoling sense of what stance it is to have in its encounter with the course of experience in the world. It eliminates the unknown. It makes for predictability and a sense of order in the world's intrusion into, and ravages of, the self. To varying degrees, to be in possession of, or to aspire to, the comprehensive perspective which will subsume everything, every instance of suffering, into a component of a greater unity, is sometimes to separate the self from the very prospect of detachment and self-renunciation.

## II

I shall next illustrate White's conception of one form of self-renouncing orientation to the world which is unconnected to a perspective on life as a whole, thus showing how the latter

is not intrinsic to the former as the Perspective-thesis implies. A Fringe of Leaves is a story of how one woman attains a deep and self-renouncing virtue in the face of a hostile universe full of inexplicable suffering. It provides a picture of virtue directly because of the absence of a unifying and consolatory perspective on the scheme of things.

A girl of humble Cornish origins, Ellen Gluyas is called to suppress her sensual self through pressure to conform to the social standards imposed by marriage to the wealthy and respectable Austin Roxburgh. The latter acquaints her with a conventional moral and intellectual world view, together with a comforting picture of an abstract Divine Being. His project at marrying this Cornish farmer's daughter is to create a 'work of art...to create a beautiful, charming...socially acceptable companion out of what was only superficially unpromising material' (FL 61). In the roles of wife, nurse to the sickly Roxburgh, and expectant mother she is inducted to believe in 'a merciful power shaping her own destiny' (FL 247).

To arrive at her selflessness Ellen Roxburgh has to go through an ordeal of terrible suffering. The ship carrying her and her husband back from Australia is sunk off the Queensland coast. The other survivors are murdered by Aborigines but Ellen Roxburgh is taken captive, stripped, beaten, tortured and humiliated. Her hair is ripped from its roots, her body covered in a stinking fat and charcoal to overlay its whiteness. Later she is forced to look after a dying aboriginal child whose pus flows over her body. Finally she is made to partake in cannibalistic ritual. Ellen Roxburgh's respectable self, the work of art constructed by her now dead husband, is torn away from her. But this 'extraction' of the self is prelude to, not the culmination of, her renunciation of self.

Before highlighting how Ellen Roxburgh's self-renouncing virtue is completely devoid of anything encapsulated in the Perspective-thesis, some parallels can be made between Ellen Roxburgh's plight and the attempt to explain suffering that the Perspective-

thesis is reacting against.

Ellen Roxburgh is thrust into a dark universe where the conventions of civilization no longer exist. She experiences what must approach to the worst imaginable suffering. In such a situation she finds she can never pray again. She can never address the sort of God that has a grand design, a plan writ large. When the spear strikes her husband's neck he begs her to pray. The narrator tells us: 'She could not, would never pray again' (FL 240). She utters words in the form of a question: 'Oh, no, Lord! Why are we born, then?'. But this is not a genuine question, not something she even considers there can now ever be an answer to. Never again can she think of God as a manipulator of events, as the architect of a grand design. Her ordeals lead her to recognize she '...could not have explained the reason for her being there, or whether she had served a purpose, ever' (FL 333). In her captivity she can find '...no cause or reason for her presence in a clueless maze' (FL 253).

Despite these points of connection, Patrick White's portrayal of Ellen Roxburgh's situation is actually damaging to the Perspective-thesis. It is damaging because she cannot make any sense of the idea of a view of 'the whole'. Her experience of suffering makes it no longer possible to see grace in all things, no longer possible to see everything from some overriding standpoint, the view sub specie aeternitatis. Her virtue consists of a lack of dependence on such a vision, on a lack of need to clutch at the straw that indicates some grasp of the totality. Her suffering is broken up into distinct stages, each as self-contained and inexplicable as the others. There is no overriding view that somehow can unite them.

Ellen Roxburgh comes to see the true horror in suffering precisely because she sees each instance of it as discrete, pointless and unrelatable to anything else. She identifies with all those who suffer. She recalls the 'calf with the knife at its throat' as well as the terror in her convict lover's eyes when he contemplates the return to civilization and the brutality he will suffer (FL 367). She views with compassion a gang of prisoners and '...was united

in one terrible spasm with this rabble of men...their...eyes glaring with hatred when not blurred by cataracts of grief'. She realizes that she will never 'feel their bodies shudder while asleep in her arms, though the rustle of never-motionless chains conveyed a distrust which no passion or tenderness of hers could ever help exorcize' (FL 371). She retreats into what the world sees as 'oddness' because of her sensitivity to the pain of others.

Ellen Roxburgh's response to others is not part of a perspective on the whole of life. Her grasp of the horror of suffering involves an appreciation that there simply is no 'whole' to which each instance of suffering belongs. The depth of her affiliation and solidarity with others is seen precisely in her view of the stark isolation of each instance of suffering, the frightening aloneness which each one who suffers has thrust upon them.

Nor is Ellen Roxburgh's concern for others derived from a belief in a God of the form of an additional Being, overseeing the world and allocating rewards according to merit. At the end of the novel, in a small, rough chapel she finds the words 'GOD IS LOVE' written in rough lettering. For a time the Roxburghs' God, the God of the ordered, moral design taunts her for the 'betrayal of her earthly loves'. The latter refers to her love of her convict rescuer, a love she never felt for the precise Mr Roxburgh. But in the 'beatitude of silence' that encloses her she finds another God. In the face of a purposeless universe she finds a God that represents her capacity to identify with all those others confronted with meaningless pain.

Against the potential objection that there is nothing religious about this view we should appreciate that some conceptions of love found in Christianity lead to a kind of atheism. A classic example is Simone Weil's idea of 'Atheism as a Purification'.

I am quite sure that there is not a God in the sense that nothing real can be anything like what I am able to conceive when I pronounce this word (Gravity and Grace, trans. E. Craufurd, London: Routledge, 1963, 103. Hereafter 'GG').

In this self-renouncing stance Weil is asserting that there is nothing in her that is able to determine what is real. But the consolation of knowing that there is a God is all too often a matter of confidence in the self's capacity to discern things. 'Religion in so far as it is a source of consolation is a hindrance to true faith: in this sense atheism is a purification' (GG 104). There is also the striking passage which we can readily relate to Ellen Roxburgh's experience of God:

This world, in so far as it is completely empty of God, is God Himself (GG 99). Ellen Roxburgh, in finding the world empty of the Roxburgh God, is actually undergoing the Weilian 'purification of atheism'. Finding the world empty of God is what makes her orientation to the world self-renouncing and religious. She no longer has the presumption to claim a capacity to discern any order in the world.

For Patrick White genuine self-renunciation is not underpinned by any all encompassing perspective, nor by an independence from the world. It is a humble virtue, a recognition of the fragility and depth of those who share the world with us. In the face of a hostile universe of terrible suffering, there is no mastery, no independence of the world. There is only a kinship with and a dependence on others that makes life, in a certain sense, possible. In the words of the epigraph from Louis Aragon: 'Love is your last chance. There is really nothing else on earth to keep you there'.

### III

Two conclusions emerge from what we have considered in this section. Firstly, that White, in his novel The Eye of the Storm shows that the attitude of independence from contingencies encapsulated in the Perspective-thesis is not inherently self-renouncing but can co-exist with a self-orientated view of the world.



Secondly, White shows us that the Perspective-thesis does not mark anything intrinsic to a self-renouncing orientation to the world. Ellen Roxburgh's is a self-renunciation that lacks any perspective on life as a whole.

#### **4. White and the Unreflectiveness-Thesis**

The Unreflectiveness-thesis was defined in Chapter 1 as holding that reflectiveness is incompatible with self-renouncing faith because it permits an avenue for the self to intrude. In this section I shall explore the way White's understanding both connects with and departs from the Wittgensteinian position.

In White's concept of self-renunciation reflectiveness is a prelude to a deeper form of renouncing the self. David Marr in his biography of White recounts some words by him on this matter:

There is a greater humility than simple souls are born with...The humility which evolves after sophisticated intellectuals have wrestled with their passions, self-hatred and despair...(Patrick White: *A Life*, Australia: Randon House, 1991, 313).

These words are a generalised statement of what White intends to convey. The term 'intellectuals', for example, is not to be taken literally. Neither Voss nor Ellen Roxburgh would qualify as intellectuals in the commonplace sense; Laura Trevelyan is more bookish and perhaps nearer the mark. The term 'sophisticated' is a more useful clue to what White is seeking to convey. Laura, Voss and Ellen are not simple. They are highly complex, with the capacity to articulate a developed sense of themselves. They are driven by a need to find a purpose and a meaning for their own selves. Voss is driven to leave the security of his German small-town world to embark on a grand mission that is ultimately motivated by a masked need to eradicate his own vulnerability. Ellen Roxburgh has been brought to seek the goal of living as the work of art her fastidious husband has planned for her to be. Laura

Trevellyan, the Cambridge-bred niece of the colonial merchant, Mr Bonner, is introduced initially as being in a state of some disturbance, resulting from her losing her religious faith. For her, that, together with her intellectual pleasures, was what kept her inwardly apart from the Bonners' world of petty middle class proprieties.

In short, these characters have a sense of incompleteness which they can articulate to themselves and which motivates a dissatisfaction with what they have and, more fundamentally, with what they are in themselves. They recognise this of themselves at times, even though they seek, at other times, to deliberately deny it. In Voss the means to deny it involve strong incursions into the external world to get it to conform to his wants. To a lesser extent, this is true also of Laura. Her wilfulness in pursuing her self-cultivation is felt by the Bonner household and dubbed 'selfishness' by Mrs Bonner. (Ellen Roxburgh, one feels, is from the beginning ill-at-ease with the self she is pressured into becoming. Yet she too, to a degree, partakes of the purposive drive to forge her self in a particular way). For White the obsessive aspiration for such self-cultivation is closely connected to seeking a form of self-sufficiency.

The self-cultivation these characters are engaged in is one which cuts away dependence on, or even concern for, other human beings. Voss, as previously noted, shrunk away from any hint of compassion that arose within him lest that nullify his concern for his mission. Laura's early aloofness is sometimes callous. The Roxburgh self, which Ellen is supposed to aspire to, sees everything in terms of an ordered respectability. The life of discrete intellectual pleasures and polite conversation made identification and understanding of other selves virtually impossible. In Mr Roxburgh himself this distancing of the self from others is almost a cult, a way of clinically insulating it from the incursions of others.

Let us next take Laura Trevellyan as an example and show how she comes to reject the earlier self-sufficiency that she sought. In so doing, the reflectiveness issue in

White's work can then be compared to the Unreflectiveness-thesis.

Having met Voss and recognised in him a kindred spirit whose whole life is centred on his own self-sufficiency, Laura develops a saint-like life of intercession for Voss' salvation.

But she did pray. Not for herself, she had abandoned herself...She prayed for that being for whom the ark of her love was built. She prayed over and over, for JOHANN ULRICH VOSS, until, through the ordinary bread of words, she did receive divine sustenance (V 327).

As her faith intensifies, Laura's love becomes less centred on Voss as a lover and more open to him as man with failings: '...that man is so shoddy, so contemptible, greedy, jealous, stubborn, ignorant. Who will love him when I am gone? I only pray that God will'. Later still, her devotion extends beyond Voss to humanity in general.

The crucial point I wish to stress is that White ascribes to Laura not a 'natural' unreflectiveness, in the sense of being by birth, upbringing and sensibility unable to reflect on her orientation to the world. Rather, her unreflectiveness is a matter of being a deliberate stance of not seeking to express herself. Early on, in one of her few meetings with Voss before his departure into the desert, she is described as '...become too wooden...to express herself...to humble and contrite, she who had been proud on her powerful horse' (V 116). Self-renunciation is here seen as a state of 'woodenness', of inanimation as far as needing to express or inwardly articulate one's own feelings is concerned. 'The vows were rigorous that she imposed upon herself, to the exclusion of all personal life, certainly of introspection, however great her longing for those delights of hell'.

White characterises her self-renunciation in terms of a containment of her need of and dependence on self-expression. 'A blank page is more expressive than my own emptiness' (V 97) she says, as a first indication of her movement towards abandoning her

previous concern to find, cultivate and assertively affirm a particular form of selfhood. The latter is for White the essence of self-sufficiency and the foundation of what he means by a 'personal life'.

This is a form of self-renunciation which is in one way different from that presupposed by the Unreflectiveness-thesis. In the latter the emphasis is on the lack of capacity to reflect - the individual is so subsumed to viewing the world under the categories defined for it by the perspective that the capacity to reflect on its attachments is absent. Laura, in contrast, is one who suppresses her need for an inner assessment, refinement and perfection of her aspired for self-definition. She works towards a condition in which her life consists of her acting in concern for others. For example, an expression of her early aspiration for a refined intellectual selfhood was her inner, cultivated repugnance towards the 'flesh' of her ungainly maid, Rose Portion. As a result of her gradual suppression of that cultivated self she is able to finally embrace her unfortunate servant. White intends this to signify her inner curtailment of the tendency to typify others in ways that help support her aspired for ideal of selfhood. In suppressing her 'personal life' she can now respond to Rose in all her particularity as a suffering human being. Her previous absorption with self-definition and self-cultivation - to be, in terms of intellect and sensibility, above the middle class merchant mentality - has been deliberately put aside.

Despite this difference there is an important similarity between White and the Unreflectiveness-thesis. The latter thesis stresses the consoling aspect of reflection which enables the self to get a foothold. White is also against an infatuation with an 'inner' agenda or project for the cultivation of self. Self-renunciation involves renouncing the self-absorption that is behind such a project. In short, White portrays self-renunciation as a form of unreflectiveness, but one involving deliberate suppression of reflectiveness. Why is he so keen to stress that this is something that is deliberately done?

The answer is that White believes (like Mauriac) that the state of 'natural' unreflectiveness - an unreflectiveness which exists because the self has had no chance to question its basic orientation to the world - can also be self-affirmingly consoling in a way that precludes renunciation of self.

The clearest example of a form of unreflectiveness that is consolatory and a barrier to self-renunciation is that of Judd, another character from the novel Voss. Judd is the ex-convict whose resilience in the face of terrible punishment has earned him release from imprisonment. He is chosen as an expedition member by Voss for that quality of patient endurance.

Nobody here, (Voss) suspected, looking round, had explored his own mind to the extent that would enable him to bear such experience. Except perhaps the convict, whose mind he could not read. The convict had been tempered in hell, and, as he had said, survived.

Voss appreciates what he takes to be Judd's capacity to endure. As it happens, Judd is the sole member of the expedition to survive the terrifying ordeal of the desert. Yet in White's terms Judd's survival is not accompanied by any spiritual progression.

The reason for Judd's lack of progression is his rootedness to the consolation of a selfhood that is as empty of reflection as the harsh environment in which he lives. White has Voss going in advance of the main party to Judd's homestead on the edge of the wilderness to find out what Judd is like. He finds a '...hut of bleached slabs that melted into the live trunks of the surrounding trees' (V 154). In White's description, the hut has a weathered and enduring quality that is entirely part of the natural surroundings. It does not stand out. It persists through its total lack of incongruity. It is symptomatic of Judd's self: silent, with only the minimum of attachments to any human comfort, and unconscious of anything further. When Voss questions the absent Judd's wife:

"What will you do when your husband goes?"

"What I always do...I will be here...for ever now".

"Have you no wish for further experience of life?"

She was suspicious of the words the stranger used. An educated gentleman.

"What else would I want to know?", she asked, staring at her fat butter.

"Or revisit loved places?".....

"No", she said sulkily. "I do not love any other place, anyways enough to go back.

This is my place".

When she raised her eyes again, he did believe it. Her glance would not betray the honest shape of her possessions. They were her true eyes, looking through ferns at all wonders, animal black, not wishing to interpret (V 156).

The possessions of her spartan household are her true eyes; her interpretation of, indeed the extent of, the world is limited to what she can relate to her simple, routine life.

She tells Voss that things are different with her husband. He has, she says, a need to want to know more about things. Even Voss is taken in by Judd's apparent inner strength.

Mr Judd is what people call a good man. He is not a professional saint, as is Mr Palfreyman. He is a tentative one, ever trying his dubious strength...It is tempting to love such a man, but I cannot kill myself quite off...(V 231).

Voss asks Judd why he is ready to leave his home, all he has made, for the possibility of nothing. Judd replies: 'It is not mine...any more than that gold chain that someone shook in the street. And when they would take the cat on me, I would know that these bones were not mine, neither. Oh sir, I have nothing to lose and everything to find' (V 159). Superficially, these words suggest a profound lack of self-centredness. Yet it turns out not to be the form of self absence that is genuinely akin to the self-renunciation that comes to

be exemplified in White's principal characters.

Despite his natural unreflectiveness Judd is no more able to renounce the attachments of self, than is his wife. His vision of things is ultimately comparable to hers. During the course of the expedition it is the spartan world of his wilderness homestead that he has carved from the unyielding emptiness of the bush that Judd finally hankers for. He breaks away from the remains of the party led by Voss. 'Since his own fat paddocks, not the deserts of mysticism, nor the transfiguration of Christ, are the fate of common man, he was yearning for the big breasts of his wife, that would smell of fresh-baked bread even after she had taken off her shift' (V 354). Although Judd's attachments to the comforts of life are few, he clings to them with an unmovable tenacity.

All this represents engagement in a process of self-cultivation, even though Judd has no conscious plan towards this end. The mere fact that it is unreflective does not make the process of developing and maintaining Judd's selfhood any less self-orientated.

Yet the fact that it is unreflective does mean it is a process that cannot be unseated. This comes out, for example, during the Christmas day celebrations in the desert. Judd retires to be 'hidden by the blessed scrub'.

...All the scraps of knowledge with which he was filled, all those raw hunks of life that, for choice or by force, he had swallowed down, were reduced by the great mystery of words to the most shameful matter. Words were not the servants of life, but life, rather, was the slave of words. So the black print of other people's books became a swarm of victorious ants that carried off a man's self-respect...(V 217). Words attack Judd's self-respect, they render all his existing practical knowledge into something insufficient, they threaten to enslave him. Judd wanders into the bush to be '...soothed at last by leaves and silence' (V 217). The absence of words and articulate reflection is consoling for him because there is no pressure to relate his own self to anything

outside it. Judd has come to terms with the objects, events and resources of the immediate world. His lack of self-consciousness denies him any view of where he stands in relation to anything else. Judd can never achieve the progression of Laura or Voss, which is the theme of the novel: to create, pursue and fail in the achievement of a vision of self-sufficiency as the prelude to self-renunciation.

Because Laura and Voss can reflect on their project of self-cultivation they can come to realise the way it has nullified their attitudes to other people. Judd cannot do that.

The result is that Judd is unable to respond to the particularity of other people. His selfhood is expressed in the way everything is seen as a sort of oneness at a distance from himself. Recall the words White uses to refer to the way Judd's wife sees: '... her true eyes, looking through ferns at all wonders, animal black, not wishing to interpret (V 156). Judd's quality of endurance is such that nothing affects him. The suffering of others, like that of his own, is of no real concern. His gaze is one 'through ferns'; it is 'animal black'. Nothing is distinguished. Everything is part of an undifferentiated whole. The particular suffering of a particular person is not something that Judd's unreflectiveness can register or acknowledge. This is where it is in complete contrast to the suppression of reflectiveness as found in Laura.

This section can now be summarised. In this section we have explored White's view of the way in which people engage in a process of self-cultivation which prevents them responding to the particularity of others. His view connects with the Unreflectiveness-thesis in the following way. He sees self-orientated consolation arising from the inner, reflective project of self-cultivation. However, White's conception also differs from the Unreflectiveness-thesis. Firstly, he stresses that self-renunciation is not a matter of being in a state of 'natural' unreflectiveness (as defined above, in connection with Judd). Rather, it requires a deliberate, reflective suppression of the self's inner infatuation with cultivating



the self. Secondly, he sees a state of natural unreflectiveness as also involving consolation and self-affirmation in that it too involves a process (even if not explicitly formulated into a project) of self-cultivation. Such a state is, on his view, particularly resistant to self-renunciation because of its resilience to reflection. It is also seen as impervious to appreciating the particularity of other individuals.

## **5. White and the Anti-Justification Thesis**

The Anti-Justification thesis, it will be recalled, is the thesis that stresses acceptance of all things in this world without relating them to another, a metaphysical realm. The thesis also holds that self-renouncing faith does not have God as any sort of controller on high. Indeed, the essence of the thesis is the idea that importing metaphysics into religious life cancels out self-renunciation and makes for self-orientation.

In section 3 of this chapter we noted the non-metaphysical dimension to Ellen Roxburgh's self-renunciation. In particular, it is worth recalling how she was brought to abandon the Roxburgh God, the God of order and of proportionate rewards for virtuous action.

In this section I want to look at a further example which enables us to see that White does have more to convey on the issue as to whether and why the idea of a metaphysical God could be thought to be a self-orientated idea. The example I shall highlight is that of Himmelfarb in White's novel Riders in the Chariot.

Having achieved the respected status of a professorship at a German University in the years just preceding the rise of Nazism, Himmelfarb turns to his dead mother's Orthodox Jewish roots. He comes, increasingly, to adopt her sombre stiffness, her silence and 'solitude of soul'. Just as she had ignored her husband's accommodation with the world outside Judaism and rejected the idea that 'men had...confined the infinite' (RC 111), so

Himmelfarb retreats from the secular life around him. He becomes like those '...driven by the instinct of their faith...(those)...intoxicated with the honey of their God' (RC 112).

For by now, Himmelfarb had taken the path of inwardness. He could not resist silence, and became morose on evenings when he was prevented from retreating early to his room...(H)e longed for an ecstasy so cool and green that his own desert would drink the heavenly moisture (RC 152).

Steeping himself in Jewish mysticism he strives to rise above the material world around him, to insulate himself from its influence (RC 177). One powerful illustration of this is when Himmelfarb prays in the attic of the large, deteriorating house in which he is sheltered to avoid Nazi arrest. In the night, Allied bombers pound the surrounding districts.

The Jew rocked in his attic, but knew himself at that moment to be closer than ever to his God...As the moonlight filled with the black shadows of wings, and all the evil in the world was aimed at the fragile lichen roof, he was miraculously transported...(RC 184).

In his state of '...equanimity, of solitariness, of disinterest' (RC 182) he directs his vision to the mass of humanity and '...the quicklime of compassion...consumed him' (RC 187). By his prayer and detachment from the imminent danger from the explosions all around him he hopes to mystically bring suffering humanity, as well as the natural world, into a union with God.

...(H)e was racked by his persistent longing to exceed the bounds of reason: to gather up the sparks, visible intermittently inside the thin shells of human faces; to break through to the sparks of light imprisoned in the form of wood and stone (RC 157).

Consistent with his mission is his unwillingness to flee from the Nazi threat. He is '...determined not to fear whatever may be in store for his creature flesh' (RC 161) because

he claims Judaism has a mystical role in the mission of 'reconstruction' (RC 157). The mission is hindered by trying to escape the evil to be inflicted: 'We can never escape a collective judgement. We are one. No particle may fall away without damaging the whole' (RC 168).

In short, Himmelfarb has a metaphysical conception of God and of the Divine purpose. The God he tries to commune with is in some other realm somehow distinct from this world. Himmelfarb sees his mission as one of bringing this world, or at least those untainted elements in it, into union with that realm.

The point we find in White's novel is the self-orientation that accompanies Himmelfarb's religion, centred as it is on metaphysics. Himmelfarb's is a 'reprehensible ambition' (RC 157) which does nothing to further compassion for the ordinary human beings he comes into contact with. Indeed, his detachment is portrayed as reaching almost inhuman proportions. For example, having handed himself in to the Nazis he is taken with other prisoners on a long train journey to a death camp. Throughout that journey Himmelfarb views everything from a distance without being able to enter into the genuine fears of those around him. White writes with irony that Himmelfarb had '...withdrawn...but would return at intervals, to observe the faces of those he truly loved' (RC 199). When one of the women prisoners being led to the gas chambers screams in despair at the indignity of having to proceed naked, all Himmelfarb (himself chosen as worker to clear away the bodies and so be spared) can think in terms of is his metaphysical faith: '"The Name! Remember they can't take the Name! When they have torn off our skins, that will clothe"' (RC 205). This is not a mere poetic statement intended to give another person solace. For Himmelfarb's faith is imbued with the mystical meanings of words and names and images. In his final hours he imagines his mystical progression 'upward', '...his ankles...wreathed with...joyous fire...passed...the two date-palms of smoking plumes' (RC 492). And he

imagines the glorious divine light, a light by which '...even the most pitiable or monstrous incidents experienced by human understanding were justified...' (RC 492). Himmelfarb's faith in a metaphysical order directs him away from the reality of other human beings and the particularity of their fears.

This is also well illustrated in the way he treats his wife, Reha, and the way she contrasts with him. She is a simple, uncomplicated and virtuous Jewish woman. Through many a long evening she sews for some family that has been brought to poverty. Her '...gaiety of mind...would lift up many who were cast down' (RC 156). When the women sit together to sew funeral wear, the elderly ones feel a sadness and are reminded that their deaths are imminent. It is Reha's kindness that dissipates their dejection. 'That which the women knew, all that was solid and good, might be expected to endure a little longer, in spite of the reminder of the white linen garments' (RC 152). All this contrasts with Himmelfarb's stiff coldness and distance from the concerns of others.

Himmelfarb treats his wife as merely a support to ease his own burdens during the times when his spiritual struggles become difficult. It is implied that he deprives her of the chance to bear children, an avenue on which her saintly generosity to others would have had one further chance to thrive. Instead, she spends many long evenings down the years alone while he carries out his spiritual practices in his own room. One day when she is worried about death and the encroaching Nazi terror she appeals to him: '(W)hat can we hold in our minds to make the end bearable.' All he can offer her, according to White's view, is an empty reference to a metaphysical realm: 'This table...God is in this table...Some have been able to endure the worse tortures by concentrating on the Name...' (RC 158). As White stresses, this is to do nothing for the wife he supposedly loves. White elsewhere writes: '...words do not convince the doubting soul, like living tokens' (RC 147).

What White is trying to draw attention to is that Himmelfarb's Metaphysical God is an abstraction, an abstraction that detracts from the virtue of compassion and self-renouncing service to others. Himmelfarb sees everything in terms of a metaphysical order and such an orientation swerves him away from what, for White, is our real duty of concern for others. Walking home one night when the attacks on the Jews begin, when Jewish premises are looted and their occupants taken away, Himmelfarb detours from going home. His mission, as he sees it, is one of atonement, of suffering in this world in order to all the better relate this world to another order. The result of his musing on his mission is that when he finally does go home he finds only an empty shell. Reha has been taken. Without the comfort of his presence she has been seized and taken alone to meet her death.

It has already been argued in previous sections that White sees self-renunciation as involving a cessation of a form of self-cultivation. In Riders in the Chariot he links Himmelfarb's obsession with a metaphysical faith to his striving to forge a self-identity. White takes this back to his mother's early influence. It is she, determined to mark her son as Jewish and not belonging to the gentile-influenced world of her husband, presents him as 'Mordecai ben Moshe...to establish, as it were, an unmistakable identity' (RC 114). In the German world, and by his father, he is always known as 'Martin'. Himmelfarb's adolescence is described as '...an age of mirrors, and Mordecai attempted regularly to solve the mystery of himself' (RC 115). In the period of his post-graduate studies at Oxford, Himmelfarb is portrayed as again engulfed with carving out a distinct self-identity for himself. He wants to relinquish '...the identity with which his parents were convinced they had endowed him' (RC 126).

Although Himmelfarb abandons Judaism for many years, what brings him back to a metaphysical version of it is again an obsessive concern to cultivate his distinct identity. Now that his books have made him an eminent scholar of English literature, he finally tires

of the standardised adulation he receives. He wants to forge a more distinct and novel identity. This is how his infatuation with Jewish mysticism begins. Instead of simply living from day to day and acting virtuously to those he comes into contact with, Himmelfarb is, for White, a character wholly entranced by the spell of what he has achieved and what more he might become.

The deep-seatedness of his obsession is powerfully shown in the scene in which he meditates and believes he sees a vision of a supernatural visitor. What has happened is that he has fallen asleep during his attempts to arrive at a mystical state. Then, in the last hour before dawn he awakes and sees an image, which is actually his own, in a mirror.

(He had) got to his feet to receive the messenger of light or resist the dark dissembler. When he was transfixed by his own horror. Of his own image...in a distorting mirror. Fortunately, he was prevented from shouting the blasphemies that occurred to him, because his own voice had been temporarily removed. Nor could he inflict on the material forms which surrounded him, themselves the cloaks of spiritual deceit, the damage which he felt compelled to do...(RC 152).

Here we find that he almost violently reacts to the disappointment that there is no available support for his metaphysical faith. This is a man whose very identity depends on there being messengers from another realm.

Further proof of the way a metaphysical faith is linked to his project of cultivating his self-image is the way Himmelfarb reacts to his almost 'miraculous' rescue from the death camps. Firstly, he is chosen almost literally from the face of death by the Nazis to remain alive to clear away the bodies. Then, an insurrection breaks out at the camp and in the turmoil Himmelfarb escapes. Rather than thanks to God, or even compassion to his rescuers, what Himmelfarb predominantly feels is a reinforcement of his sense of being chosen for and having a special place in the Divine plan for elevating the elect elements of

the material world into mystical union with the heavenly.

Years later, in the delirium before his death, induced by his mock crucifixion by the Australian factory workers, Himmelfarb comes to confront the reality of what his infatuation with his own self-image has blinded him to. At first, on the cross, he believes he has been given a sign. But when he is brought down, White makes clear he is being called to the 'level of reality'. (RC 468). Dying, he is brought to realise his failure. More than that, he is brought to see 'the mystery of failure' (RC 480). That is, he is brought to see that in failure there is a mystery. Dying '...he must contend with the figure of Moshe his father...Always separate during the illusory life of men, now they touched, it seemed, at the point of failure' (RC 479). Moshe, he had felt contempt for, especially for his failure to escape his Jewish identity. That was a failure, in that his conversion to Catholicism brought him no nearer to finding himself. Though Moshe did bring home the poorer Jews to eat at his table, to share some of his wealth, while his son felt only arrogance towards them. Through recognising both their failures, Himmelfarb begins to feel compassion for that long dead parent.

Equally, Himmelfarb sees finally how far he has always been from the simple virtue of his dead wife, Reha. 'He could see now the rightness of all that his wife had been allowed in her simplicity to see...the mystery of failure might be pierced only by those of extreme simplicity of soul' (RC 480). Reha, who had been content to view others with compassion and not bother herself with her own self-cultivation, is the model for the religious life he has failed to live.

Let us finally consider the significance of White's presentation of Himmelfarb. Is this an expression of the Anti-Justification thesis ? In other words, does White imply that a faith involving metaphysics is necessarily self-orientated ?

Despite White's striking rejection of such a faith I think that what the Himmelfarb case shows is not that metaphysics in religion necessarily makes it something self-orientated, Rather, it shows something weaker than this. It shows that a metaphysical religion does nothing to support self-renouncing faith. Far from being integral to such faith, it can, according to White, distract from it. White is concerned to show us a conception of God that will foster in us a love of all men. A metaphysical God, for White does not do that. In Himmelfarb's case it actually drives him away from genuine concern for others. White is not in this particular novel saying this is something that will necessarily happen in all cases. Rather, he is affirming his view that there is nothing in such a religion that necessarily consolidates nor promotes self-renunciation of the form he sees as genuine.

There is one example in White's novels which does suggest that a metaphysical conception of God is necessarily less than fully self-renouncing. This example is that of the sense of God that Ellen Roxburgh arrives at, and which was detailed, in section 3. That understanding has distinct parallels with what Simone Weil says at some points in her writings. For example, in Gravity and Grace there is a section entitled 'Atheism as a Purification' where Weil says:

I am quite sure that there is not a God in the sense that nothing real can be anything like what I am able to conceive when I pronounce this word (GG 103).

In this self-renouncing stance Weil is asserting that there is nothing in her that is able to determine what is real. After her ordeal, Ellen Roxburgh similarly no longer has the presumption to claim a capacity to discern any order in the world. There is also another passage which, I believe, we can also readily relate Ellen Roxburgh's experience of God to:

This world, in so far as it is completely empty of God, is God Himself (GG 99). Ellen Roxburgh, in finding the world empty of the Roxburgh God, is actually undergoing the Weilan 'purification of atheism'. Finding the world empty of a metaphysically conceived



God is what makes her orientation to the world a self-emptying one. And to the extent that this is illustrative of the highest pitch of self-renunciation, according to White's conception of it, then this is an affirmation of the Anti-Justification thesis.

In conclusion, White does have an Anti-Justification thesis. In Riders in the Chariot he seeks to show that faith involving a metaphysical orientation is an irrelevance and a barrier to self-renunciation. In the example of Ellen Roxburgh in A Fringe of Leaves he shows us how the highest forms of renunciation of self are necessarily incompatible with an orientation to the metaphysical.

## **6. White and the Passivity-Implication**

There is no Passivity-Implication in White's characterisation of self-renunciation of the form found in the Wittgensteinian position. Self-renunciation is in no way a product of a perspectival inheritance nor perspectival shift. It is not something in which the self is enshrined in conceptual categories and lacking all reality outside the automatic response thus dictated to it. There are, however, other dimensions of passivity found in White.

One such element is found in his portrayal of certain violations of the self which render the self inert and unable to embark on the process of finding a meaningful sense of self and then achieving detachment from it.

In The Eye of the Storm Dorothy, the Princess de Lascabanes, is Elizabeth Hunter's daughter. She has returned to Australia from Paris after hearing of her mother's failing condition. Dorothy has been abandoned by her French aristocrat husband, an older man who finally deserted her when she had ceased to please his particular sexual fantasies. But her spinsterish isolation is due ultimately to her mother's treatment of her in childhood.

In his portrayal of Dorothy, White illuminates for us some ways in which the self is violated in social relationships. Dorothy, like Flora Manhood, is 'alienated' by being

reduced to being the projection of Elizabeth Hunter. Hers is a suffering in which her self is compressed and confined by having to identify with values that have no real connection with her natural sensibility.

The effect on Dorothy of her mother's cruel egotism has been to deprive her of the opportunity to find her own ideals, and forms of relating to others, in which her selfhood could flourish.

Hers is a fragmented self, like that of her actor brother: a series of unrelated 'parts'. There is her 'Australian self' which is 'steeped in the ethos of the white, the clean...' which temporarily responds to the Dutchman who comforts her during the storm encountered on the flight to Australia. There is also her 'de Lascabanes self', which is Francophile, aloof and condescending.

Sometimes the particular part she plays brings success. For example, Dorothy is surprised but glad when her 'de Lascabanes self' succeeds in defeating the contending view as to the agreed arrival time for the Cheesman's dinner party.

Dorothy was surprised to find it so easy. She would often surprise herself and could not think why there were those other moments when her skill left her; if only she could have remained in permanent control of her de Lascabanes technique she might have rivalled her brother Basil as an actor, or a hoax (ES 279).

But in whatever part she plays she cannot compete with the powerful presence of her mother whose power of captivating others reduces Dorothy to the status of a mere bystander. Even at seventy Elizabeth Hunter could dominate Dorothy in sexual competition. The latter is left to imagine herself as the heroine of her favourite reading, Stendal's The Charterhouse of Parma:

Sometimes at night Madame de Lascabanes allowed herself a touch of brilliance which should have been hers. Under the sheet she crossed her still estimable legs,

an involuntary legacy from Elizabeth Hunter, and thought how she would enslave others...simply by using her eyes.

She thus retreats into fantasy, but a fantasy centred on the one ideal her mother has instilled into her: the domination and captivation of others.

White illustrates how Elizabeth Hunter's egotism has inflicted upon her daughter a slow, emotional murder. Dorothy's childhood rejection and domination by the powerful ego of her mother has left her to play a series of parts which are modelled on the one single ideal she has been brought up to respect: control over others. Dorothy's tragedy is that she does not have the social graces needed to achieve it in any sustained way. She has inherited her father's passivity and ordinariness.

Thus Dorothy's suffering stems from the conflict between what she has been brought up to idealize and compete with, on the one hand, and what she has the natural gifts to achieve, on the other. As a consequence, she feels her own self as a burden, a constraint. 'I have never managed to escape being this thing, Myself' (ES 48). Her selfhood is characterised by its 'thingness'. Rather than being something organic, able to grow in response to its own experience of the world, it is static. It is unable to see in any terms other than those projected by Elizabeth Hunter.

Dorothy's suffering is real and sometimes intense. It affects the pattern of her life. She has never had any close friends. When she and her brother visit together their old home at Kudjiri, in a desperate effort to find love they set aside the taboo on incest. But they find no fulfilment in each other anymore than they have the capacity for love and fellow-feeling elsewhere.

To summarise, White is conscious of the tragedy in which some people suffer an enforced passivity, a passivity resulting from them having been violated in a way that makes them unable to develop a full sense of themselves. In such cases, renunciation of self is not

an option.

A further dimension of passivity in White's concept of self-renunciation is to be found in the very idea of self-renunciation as a cessation of self-cultivation. His entire view hinges not on activity in the world but on ceasing to be active. It finally centres on a passive stance of receptivity which is in many way quietist. As we have seen, this comes out very clearly in the discussion of White in relation to the Acceptance-thesis (see section 2). This quietist element may derive from the influence of Simone Weil, who stresses 'attention' rather than 'will' in Gravity and Grace (GG 105) and the state of en hypomene, waiting in patience. This latter idea is particularly prominent in Waiting on God (trans. E. Craufurd, London: Routledge, 1951).

## 7. Conclusions

Patrick White's model of self-renunciation is significantly distinct from that presupposed by the Wittgensteinian position.

This conclusion is supported by the differences we have noted, namely, that several of the Wittgensteinian position's theses are not intrinsic to self-renunciation. Moreover, some are exposed as not being inherently self-renouncing according to White's model.

(1) With respect to the Unreflectiveness-thesis, White does emphasise a form of unreflectiveness as having a place in self-renunciation. He sees self-orientated consolation arising from the inner, reflective project of self-cultivation. However, he differs from the Unreflectiveness-thesis in two ways. First, in the emphasis he gives to the need for a deliberate suppression of such cultivation. Secondly, in the way he sees 'natural' unreflectiveness - an unreflectiveness inherited through what one has had bequeathed to one from one's conceptual and cultural background - as also prone to be clung to out of a desire for consolation.

(2) There is no Perspective-thesis in White. In his view an aspiration for the perspective sub specie aeternitatis is neither intrinsic to self-renunciation (the Ellen Roxburgh example) nor inherently self-renouncing (as was demonstrated in the example of Elizabeth Hunter).

(3) White does not have a Passivity-Implication. There is, however, a strongly passive and quietist element in his view of self-renouncing faith.

(4) There are clear parallels between White's model and the Acceptance-thesis:

- (a) White does stress the non-centrality of the self in a way that culminates in a sense of the self's dispensability.
- (b) White's model includes an unqualified acceptance of pointless suffering which has clear parallels with the Acceptance-thesis.
- (c) The Whitean model stresses acceptance of the finality of death in a way directly akin to the Acceptance-thesis.
- (d) Like the Acceptance-thesis, White sees self-renunciation as an acceptance of all things which is incompatible with any attempt at manipulating events. His conceptions of the power of God and of prayer are clearly comparable to that of the Acceptance-thesis.

(5) White does have an Anti-Justification thesis. In Riders in the Chariot he seeks to show that faith involving a metaphysical orientation is an irrelevance and a barrier to self-renunciation. In the example of Ellen Roxburgh in A Fringe of Leaves he shows us how the highest forms of renunciation of self are necessarily incompatible with an orientation to the metaphysical.

In addition to the above differences there is also a difference in the structure of White's model of self-renunciation. The Wittgensteinian position, as elucidated in Chapter 1, is really a hierarchical derivation from the Absoluteness-thesis. There is no such pattern

of derivation in White. Rather, his model centres on the idea of a cessation of infatuation with the project of self-cultivation in order to respond fully, with deep compassion, to the reality of others.

## CHAPTER 5: THE ROOTS OF THE WITTGENSTEINIAN POSITION: THE WELTBILD OF SELF-CONCERN

### 1. Introduction

The last three chapters have been devoted to showing that there are authentic conceptions of self-renouncing faith that are different from that of the Wittgensteinian position outlined in Chapter 1. In this chapter I shall explore the roots of the Wittgensteinian position. My objective is directed at drawing attention to the type of Weltbild that underlies the Wittgensteinian theses and 'gives them life'. My use of the term Weltbild refers to a fundamental attitude towards existence. The main task will be to show how this Weltbild has a distinct understanding of the predicament of the self. In the next chapter we shall be able to draw on this analysis to explain why the Wittgensteinian position fails to encompass the models of self-renouncing faith found in the case-studies in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

It is important to emphasise that this chapter will not take the form of a conventional history of ideas. Reference to historical precedents will not be as systematic and comprehensive as would be required if the object was merely to find a trail of ideas going back through different historical schools of philosophy. For the aim is to make clear the character of the Weltbild of self-concern. The full appreciation of this character requires us to see it in relation to its situatedness in cultural life, that is, in the context of some aspects of the spirit of the times in Continental Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tracing minute details relating to influences will not be important. Indeed, I shall bring in references to thinkers where no direct documentary link to Wittgenstein can be demonstrated but when this elucidates further the situation in life of the Weltbild of self-concern.

The next section will set out the main facets of the Weltbild of self-concern and its sense of the predicament confronting the self. Subsequent sections will examine how the Weltbild underlies each of the Wittgensteinian theses.

## 2. Cultural Context of the Weltbild of Self-Concern

Although this chapter will range quite widely, the following individuals will receive direct attention as exemplifying the Weltbild of self-concern: Tolstoy, Georg Trakl, Rainer Maria Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Among the influences that led Wittgenstein to this Weltbild are Schopenhauer, Karl Kraus, Otto Weininger and Oswald Spengler.

The latter are specifically mentioned as influences by Wittgenstein in (CV 19). But what of the names on the former list? What justification is there for choosing to look at them? The answer to this is that they yield a form of self-concern that shows us more clearly the character of the independence of the world that underlies Wittgenstein's orientation to life. This will become clearer as we explore how each of the Wittgensteinian theses can be understood as rooted in this sort of self-concern. However, the names on the former list do have, to varying degrees, connections with the cultural milieu in which Wittgenstein lived or had contact with. Wittgenstein is known to have read Tolstoy and, for part of his life, to have practised a form of Tolstoyan Christianity as Monk has noted (LWDG 116). Wittgenstein never met Trakl, though was on his way to meet him before the latter committed suicide. Trakl and Rilke were among the writers Wittgenstein donated money to through Ludwig von Ficker. Wittgenstein described Trakl's poetry in a letter to von Ficker as having the '...tone of true genius' (ed. C.G. Luckhardt, Wittgenstein: Sources and Perspectives, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1979, 88). In view of what Monk says about Wittgenstein's reverence for genius, his obsessive honesty and propensity to avoid inflated



descriptions of people, we should take this as an indication of Wittgenstein's sympathy for what he had seen of Trakl's work. Rilke was one of the few modern poets that Wittgenstein admired (see LWDG 108). Rilke, Trakl and Hofmannsthal were Austrian - the latter two closely associated with Vienna, as was Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein is known to have read Emerson, as both Monk (LWDG 121) and Brian McGuinness record (Wittgenstein: A Life, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, 224). (Monk denies all similarity between Wittgenstein and Emerson. Although I concede there are major differences, I hope to show they do share a comparable self-concern. Emerson was influenced by Kant and his stress on individual consciousness is largely due to German Idealism, rather than American individualism). [1]

Some connections to Kierkegaard will also be brought in from time to time. In spirit, Kierkegaard was close to exemplars of what I am calling the Weltbild of self-concern. Rilke was very familiar with his work and actually went so far as to learn Danish in order to read him in the original. Writing to Drury Wittgenstein said that 'Kierkegaard was by far the most profound thinker of the last century. Kierkegaard was a saint' (Correspondence published in Acta Philosophica Fennica 28, 1976, 1-6).

#### i. The Perceived Predicament of the Self

The Weltbild of self-concern is one reaction to a perceived sense of the predicament of the self arising among a wide circle of intellectuals during the latter part of the last century. Let us say something about this predicament.

The basic view of this predicament is the sense of the isolated self facing a vast, impersonal universe. It could be said that something of this sense of isolation goes back at least as far as Pascal, one of the first Christian thinkers operating under a new cosmology. But Romanticism had, as Charles Taylor suggests, helped to reintegrate something of an

older, meaningful order by its view of a great current of life running through everything, including ourselves (SOS 416). By the end of the nineteenth century, though, the scientific mentality had affirmed more poignantly the sense of an external universe as impersonal, empty of apparent value, and unconnected to the interests of human society. Thus Tolstoy's Ivan Illych, reflecting the author's own personal crisis, finds himself facing death '...all alone on the brink of an abyss, with no one who understood or pitied him' (L. Tolstoy, The Raid and Other Stories, trans. L. & A. Maude, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, 255). Here is a perception of a universe devoid of any transcendent reality. In his book The Savage God: A study in Suicide Alvarez talks of the '...collapse of the whole framework of values by which experience was traditionally ordered and judged - religion, politics, national and cultural traditions' (SG 181). Vienna, previously an important seat of government, now experienced the weakening of an empire and a whole order of society. Tolstoy, a well travelled Russian aristocrat, experienced the same sense of imminent decay within the institutions of his own country, as did so many countrymen of his class.

One facet of this sense of isolation of self is found in Hofmannsthal. Hofmannsthal experienced a sense of the mutability of personal identity in the face of the relentless forward movement of history and external circumstance:

This is a thing that mocks the deepest mind

And far too terrifying for lament:

That all flows by us, leaving us behind.

And that unhindered my own self could flow

Out of a little child whom now I find

Remote as a dumb dog, and scarcely know (HHP 26).

Here the self 'flows out' and from, is carried, by a process over which it has no control. Moreover, such a process leads it to a state experienced as discontinuous and unrelatable to what it was previously. F.M. Sharp in The Poet's Madness: A Reading of Georg Trakl highlights how the sense of the self's reality, as traditionally conceived, became questionable and refers to the Viennese '...age in which a vital intellectual current professed a conception of inner and outer reality with extremely malleable boundaries' (PM 65). Ernst Mach's views that the self has no reality independent of sensations in the mind had contributed to this intellectual climate in Austria, as Freud was to do slightly later.

Related to this was the perception of the self as a victim of contingencies. F.W. van Heerikhuizen explores this theme in Rilke's work and concludes that 'the feeling of being at the mercy of things is...typical of Rilke' (RMRH 22). Trakl, whose whole life was one of drug taking in order to overcome the sense of a hostile world, is a further case of an individual who felt powerless: 'It is such an indescribable disaster when one's world breaks apart' (PM 31). This is from one of a stream of letters to his friend, the publisher von Ficker, expressing his sense of being inwardly broken.

A widespread view of history exacerbated the feeling of being at the mercy of contingencies. Tolstoy's War and Peace (1869) presented history as a vast and uncontrolled flow of events. It is something outside the command of individuals, including even the most powerful leaders such as Napoleon Buonaparte. Spengler, who Wittgenstein explicitly mentioned as an influence on him, rejected a whole tradition, comprising such exponents as Kant, Herder, Lessing and Hegel, which saw history in terms of a broadly linear progression. Spengler's Decline of the West portrayed history as a moving-picture of many organic-like forms that rise, unfold and subside. Each civilization is the product and final form of a culture of its own. Such cultures grow with the same aimlessness as the flowers of the field. Yet there is a uniform law of development, periodicity and decay. But this is

determined by Cosmic forces which Spengler saw as lying below the level of thought. The wise man is one who yields to the 'crush of facts' and accepts that the world goes its own way, uninfluenced by what is said about it.

Such a Schopenhaurian-like pessimism is also found in Weininger, where it is tinged with a marked tendency towards solipsism:

The human being is alone in the cosmos, in eternal, terrible loneliness. He has no purpose outside himself, nothing outside of himself for which he lives - he has flown far from wanting to be a slave, being able to be a slave, having to be a slave: all human society recedes under him. Social ethics recedes; he is alone, alone. (From Weininger's Sex and Character, quoted in Rudolf Haller, Questions on Wittgenstein, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988, 94).

In a later writing Weininger claimed: 'The great philosopher like the great artist possesses the whole world in himself...' (ibid.).

A further factor which contributed to the sense of the isolated self was the widespread 'doubt' about the capacity of language. To be sure, this was not any single 'doubt'. Some intellectuals doubted its capacity to deliver knowledge about the external world - a view derived from Kantian uncertainty about the 'thing-in-itself'. There were also doubts about language's capacity as a medium of communication. Karl Kraus, whose acknowledged influence on Wittgenstein has already been noted, campaigned against distortions of language. W.W. Bartley III notes that Fritz Mauthner wondered whether language could survive as a medium of communication (Wittgenstein, La Salle: Open Court, 1973, 51). Hofmannsthal felt that thought had been utterly stifled by concepts and that no one could any longer be sure in his own mind about what he understands. This had awakened a desperate love of those arts not dependent on language. Against this climate we can more easily appreciate - without claiming the existence of any direct influence -

Wittgenstein's love of music and his view expressed in the Tractatus that 'There are indeed things which cannot be put into words...they make themselves manifest' (TLP 6.522).

## ii. Reaction to the Predicament

Clarifying the nature of the Weltbild of self-concern can begin with the line of reaction to the above perceived predicament confronting the self touched on in the earlier quotation from Weininger. 'The great philosopher like the great artist possesses the whole world in himself'.

This retraction from the external world and concern with interiority, in Taylor's words with the 'nature whose impulse we feel within' (SOS 416) is the first step to the Weltbild of self-concern.

Such a step became almost an obsession in the late nineteenth century and onwards.

Rilke writes in the seventh of the Duino Elegies:

Nirgends, Geliebte, wird Welt sein, als innen. Unser  
Leben geht hin mit Verwandlung. Und immer geringer  
schwindet das Außen.

[Nowhere, Beloved, can world exist but within./ Life passes in transformations. And,  
ever diminishing, outwardness dwindles] (DE 71).

Emerson believed that we are largely strangers to ourselves and counselled a turning of attention inwards. Kraus' condemnation of politics was justified on the grounds that politics '...is what a man does in order to conceal what he is' (LWDG 17). Tolstoy defines religion as a relation of man to the world; this is significant in that what is fundamental is the relation and not the constitution of the world. Hofmannsthal claims that the poet's task is directed to '...the search for harmonies in himself, a harmonising of the world which he carries within himself' (HAH 11)). This is a useful way of understanding his own work and

its commitment to interiority.

The move to inwardness permeated European society far more broadly than the above examples might imply. Indeed, the concepts of 'artist', 'genius' and 'culture' underwent a subtle development in conjunction with the emphasis on the inward self. Alvarez provides us with a useful way of understanding the change in the idea of the artist in the later part of the last century: '...the artist was no longer responsible to polite society...his prime responsibility was towards his own consciousness...the self (had become)...the arena of the arts...' (SG 181). Genius was essentially the inner authenticity, not subject to outward standards of value, that characterised the artistic response, and - for Weininger and others - the approach of the philosopher. As Raymond Williams says in his Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, 61), genius involved an integrity that could not be confined and had to work out its own salvation in a man. 'Culture', in at least one sense of the term, came to refer to an ideal of inner perfection and autonomy that could act as a buttress for the individual against the pressures of his turbulent milieu.

Turning more narrowly to philosophy, Schopenhauer's view of genius, with its stress on the ability to leave our own interests entirely out of sight (e.g. WWR I 185-6) is relevant here. In his thought, which the young Wittgenstein was well acquainted with, what happens on the 'outside' is less important than what happens within the subject. This idea was given its most powerful and sustained philosophical expression in Kant's ethical writings. Kant's concern with interiority was centred on the austere ethical motivation. As we shall see in the section of this chapter looking at the roots of the Absoluteness-thesis, the Kantian terminology crept into the Wittgenstein position but the context in which that terminology was utilised was significantly different.

Thus in what I term the Weltbild of self-concern, the concern with the inner life was by no means confined to an integrity solely dependent on a Kantian absence of self-interest accompanying or permeating one's motivation. It involved a seeking out of a means to buttress the self against contingencies. It involved seeking an inward sense akin to what was supposedly available through the sense of 'culture' mentioned in the last paragraph. But in Continental Europe, much more than in the Britain which is the subject of Raymond Williams' study, such a struggle led to a radical stress on individually forged resources unconnected with any of the institutions of society. Weininger advocated suicide. This solution was toyed with by Wittgenstein. It was also considered by many of Dostoyevsky's characters, an author Wittgenstein came to admire. Wittgenstein rejected suicide as the 'elementary sin' (NB 10.1.17). But, did he reject the basic motivation and analysis of the predicament of self that suicide was supposed to provide an answer to? This is something I would contest.

Consider what one of Dostoyevsky's characters, Kirilov in The Devils, sees suicide as the answer to:

Full freedom will come only when it makes no difference whether to live or not to live. That's the goal for everybody... He who conquers pain and fear will himself be a god... For three years I've been searching for the attribute of my divinity, and I've found it: ...self-will. That's all I can do to prove in the main point my defiance and my new terrible freedom. For it is very terrible. I am killing myself to show my defiance and my new terrible freedom (F. Dostoyevsky, The Devils, trans. David Magarshack, Harmondsworth:Penguin, 1953, 125-126, 614-615).

Reacting to this perceived predicament, Kirilov wants to be self-sufficient, true to himself and able, in one sense, to triumph over the suffering and condemnation to annihilation he is subjected to. This is the epitome of what I term the Weltbild of self concern: an obsessive

seeking to give to the self a sense of independence in confronting an impersonal universe.

In the next section I shall sketch further examples in order to suggest that the Perspective-thesis' idea of independence of the world is really just such a form of self-concern. Thereafter, I shall seek to show that all the other theses of the Wittgensteinian position can be understood as deriving from a world-view permeated with such self-concern.

### **3. The Perspective-Thesis and the Weltbild of Self-Concern**

There are some parallels in the history of philosophy which connect with the Perspective-thesis. In Plato's Apology there is the idea that the good man cannot be harmed. There is also the Stoics' ideal of self-mastery and Spinoza's belief that if we realize that the vicissitudes of life arise out of necessity we can be free of fear of them. Kant was hostile to a religious attitude that sought a justification for each particular unfortunate event. He wrote about a sense of the course of life as a whole:

(I)s it not possible to have peace and contentment, great though our wretchedness and trouble may be?...Thereby we find consolation in, though not for, the evils of life, a solid contentment with the course of life as a whole' (Lectures on Ethics, trans. L. Infeld, London: Methuen, 1930, 94).

However, Kant was critical of any connotations of 'independence' from the world that seeing the course of life as a whole might have. Being able to find consolation in the latter must not make the self 'independent of nature' like the Stoic who is 'like a god in the consciousness of the excellence of his person' (Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings on Moral Philosophy, trans. and ed. L.W. Beck, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949, 239).

The type of independence of the world that characterises the Perspective-thesis is clearly found in Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer, two thinkers close in time and sentiment



to Wittgenstein's milieu. Schopenhauer wrote in The World as Will and as Representation of the moral and happy man:

Nothing can harm him any more...for he has cut all the thousand threads of will that bind us to the world (Quoted in C. Barrett Wittgenstein, Ethics and Religious Belief, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 54).

Schopenhauer spoke of the ability to '...leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our own willing, and our aims and consequently to discard our own personality for a time, in order to remain pure knowing subject, the clear eye of the world' (WWR I 186). In his essay 'On the Indestructibility of Our Essential Being by Death' he talks of the person who becomes aware of the present as the sole form of reality and aware that it

has its source in us, and thus arises from within and not from without...(Such a person)...cannot doubt the indestructibility of his own being...his existence will not be affected by (death)...for there has been as much reality within him as without (Arthur Schopenhauer: Essays and Aphorisms, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, 69).

Kierkegaard held that the world cannot punish an innocent man because such a person 'has the strength of eternity in resisting any infringement' (Purity of Heart, London: Fontana, 1961, 85). In Fear and Trembling he wrote of the infinite resignation which is a necessary condition of his concept of faith. (Lowrie, the translator, usefully points out that the Danish term 'resignere' is more active than the English 'resignation' and that 'renunciation' is in some contexts a better translation of it). Kierkegaard says that 'he who has made the act of resignation is infinitely sufficient unto himself. What (his lover) does cannot disturb him'. He also says that '...it is only the lower natures who find the premise of their action outside themselves' (Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, 55). The latter seems to mean that in the case

of those more advanced in the approach to authentic faith, the premise of their action is located firmly within themselves. Nothing in the world outside can affect that.

It is crucially important to appreciate the context of self-concern and self-absorption which is connected to the Perspective-thesis' Sitz im Leben in Wittgenstein's view of the world. The way independence of the world involves such self-concern will now be explored in relation to Tolstoy, von Hofmannsthal, Rilke and Emerson.

Monk highlights how Wittgenstein once claimed that religious experience consisted in getting rid of anxiety (Sorge) and had the consequence of giving one the courage not to care what might happen (LWDG 67). This same obsession with his own anxiety permeates Tolstoy's thought. In his Confession Tolstoy describes how, when nearing the age of fifty, he suffered a crisis. Nothing could remove from his mind the idea that life was meaningless:

...there was nothing ahead other than deception of life and of happiness, and the reality of suffering and death: of complete annihilation...Today sickness and death will come...and nothing will remain...How can a person go on living and fail to perceive this? (C 30-31).

Faced with such a sense of being trapped, he sought long and hard, as his Confession relates, for a sense of purpose to life that would make him immune to the sense of the threat that contingencies presented.

He finally found a form of living that gave him peace. 'We are not attracted to genuine belief by the well-being the believer is promised but by something which manifests itself as the only recourse to deliverance from all misfortune and death' (C 220). According to Tolstoy's conception of religion, religion is a means of deliverance.

How is deliverance mediated by religion? In the essay 'What is Religion and of What Does its Essence Consist?' Tolstoy says that

...a rational person must do integration: that is, establish a relationship to, the

immediate issue of life, a relationship to the entire infinite universe in time and space, conceiving of it as a whole (C 87).

This idea of a relationship with the whole of life is reminiscent of the Perspective-thesis. And this link is not coincidental. Because for both what motivates, and also determines, the nature of their understanding of religion is this relationship to the whole of life and the consequent alleviation from suffering and meaninglessness that it provides. Faced with constraint, the relentless feeling of entrapment in a meaningless universe and the inability to draw sustenance from relationships with others, the solitary Tolstoyan individual yearns for a form of self-control that will provide freedom. Tolstoy had studied the Stoics in detail, especially Epictetus. He was much impressed by the latter's saying that 'A free man is only master of what he can master without impediment. And the only thing we are entirely free to master without impediment is ourselves' (C 195).

In later life Hofmannsthal turned to a pious life of adherence to the Catholic faith - he became a tertiary of the Franciscan order. By this time he had rejected his earlier preoccupation with the self's individual contemplation of life and achieved a concern for community and for other people. But for our purposes it is his earlier period that we find illustrative of a self-concern underlying the desire to see things in terms very similar to the Perspective-thesis. Hammelmann gives us some indication of the nature of this when he describes Hofmannsthal's obsession with achieving a '...state (in which)...the limitations of time...seemed to be overcome; the borderline between the finite and the infinite was temporarily suspended and he felt himself freed from the burden of the here and now' (HAH 12). Hofmannsthal was preoccupied with the way the burdens of life affected his individual self and sought a state in which he might defy them.

A good example of this is to be found in his prose piece, 'The Letter of Lord Chandos', originally published in 1902, which is a fictional letter written by an Elizabethan

English nobleman to Francis Bacon. This work is meant to be indicative of Hofmannsthal's own personal concerns.

Lord Chandos stresses that he is writing to lay bare his '...inner self...and to reveal a disease of my mind' (LLC 130). This disease he refers to is his loss of confidence in the power of language to convey his feelings. He hankers for the mystical awareness which he sometimes has experienced from seeing the most banal of objects.

In (such) moments an insignificant creature - a dog, a rat, a beetle, a crippled apple tree...mean more to me than the most beautiful, abandoned mistress of the happiest night. These mute and, on occasion, inanimate creatures rise toward me with such an abundance, such a presence of love, that my enchanted eye can find nothing in sight void of life. Everything that exists...everything touched upon by my confused thoughts has a meaning. Even my own heaviness, the general torpor of my brain, seems to acquire a meaning; I experience in and around me a blissful, never-ending interplay...(I)t is as though my body consisted of nought but ciphers, which give me the key to everything...as if we could enter into a new...relationship with the whole of existence (LLC 137-8).

Note here the infatuation with his own feelings, with recovering a sense of the whole of existence which, in effect, nullifies the effect of individual moments of burden and frustration. Everything has to acquire a meaning, everything has to satisfy the isolated self's sense of individual meaningfulness. The writer here is full of his own inner sensitivities and seeks an inner, soothing sense of integrity that external constraints cannot touch.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke's view of life also derives from a thoroughgoing self-absorption and concern to defend his own inner integrity. Graff says of him that he '...shies away from all bonds other than those which originate within him and resolve themselves in the inspired and longed-for poem' (RMRG 62). Rilke was a poet of uncompromising

determination to guard his creative freedom. Graff refers to this as an 'egocentric implacability' (RMRG 63). Though, Rilke was also, to some degree, concerned that other's integrity should be safeguarded. He once described marriage as 'two solitudes' (RMRG 65). In Letters to a Young Poet he says that '(l)oving is basically nothing in the nature of that which we call losing oneself in....unity with another person...(but) is a noble occasion for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world for himself...' (RMRG 193).

Rilke believed that any policy aimed at the mitigation of suffering, carried out either by a state or by a charitable group, could be injurious to the suffering self's integrity. In a letter of 1924 Rilke wrote:

It seems to me that nothing but disorder will be established if the general endeavour (which is a delusion) presumes to attempt a schematic mitigation or removal of suffering - an attempt which encroaches on a person's freedom far more disastrously than suffering itself which...imparts to those who confide in it directions for deliverance from it, if not externally, at least internally (RMRG 64).

Rilke is said to have been impressed by a sentence from Emerson: 'The hero is he who is immovably centred' (RMRG 280). In his life he sought to attain a state in which he was himself such a hero, such a genius. There were his periodic retreats into solitude, his distance from human entanglements, his craving for uninterrupted concentration, his disregard for private possessions and his scorn for artificial stimulants.

There is an almost religious dedication to his 'Art' in Rilke's life. Art for him is not ultimately that which manifests itself as the created object - the poem, the picture, or whatever. Rather, art for him is really the creative moment. He once wrote that if, in Thomas a Kempis' Imitation of Christ, the word 'art' is substituted for the word 'God' then that would take nothing away from the wisdom of the book. That creative moment, which

for him is both 'Art' and 'God' is possible when we '..turn our backs on events, even on our own future, in order to throw ourselves into the abyss of our being' (Letters to Merline, trans. V.M. Macdonald, London: Methuen, 1951, 48-49). In this connection he talks of this 'terrible will to Art' as enabling the artist to conquer those 'monsters', the things in the world and in himself which impede his progress and threaten his autonomy. 'For in a certain sense we are at one with them; it is they, the monsters, that hold the surplus strength which is indispensable to those that must surpass themselves...(S)uddenly we feel ourselves walking beside them...in triumph...' (49). Note here the emphasis on triumph, a triumph akin to the sense of self-mastery than associated with Wittgensteinian independence of the world.

Through his Art Rilke can praise the blessedness of existence. In a letter of 1918 to a friend, Rilke says that despite the joylessness he had suffered more than most, he had not lost faith in the essential goodness of life.

During all these years I have not asked myself...how deeply, in spite of all the misery, confusion and disfigurement in the world, I still believe in the vast, entire, far-inexhaustible possibilities of life...(T)he intrication of so many fatalities and horrors...cannot confuse my judgement about the fullness and goodness and affectionateness of existence (DE 140)..

Rilke is here expressing a quite deliberate defiance. All the pains in life cannot confuse his judgement that, despite all these unpleasant things, what he had attained is an attitude which is able to dismiss their power to affect him.

The Duino Elegies, begun during a period of solitude at Duino Castle, near Trieste (the property of one of his wealthy patrons) contain a number of parallels to the Perspective-thesis' stress on seeing in terms of the whole and achieving an independence of the world. In the Elegies Rilke seeks to invoke in us a way of seeing suffering and the contingencies of the world in a different light from that in which they are usually viewed.

What repelled him, says J.B. Leishman in his commentary on the Elegies, was

...that half-life from which death, and all that is mysterious and inexplicable is simply excluded; that life whose consolations are provided for by conventional religion, and whose activities are the pursuit of happiness and the making of money; from which fear and mystery are banished by distraction, and where suffering is regarded as merely an unfortunate accident... (DE 142).

In other words, Rilke is resistant to a view in which suffering is avoided. He wants to confront it with a certain sort of inner defiance which achieves a fuller state of existence. Having glimpsed this fuller state, Rilke can say

We wasters of sorrows !  
How we stare away into sad endurance beyond them,  
trying to forsee their end ! Whereas they  
are nothing else than our winter foliage,  
our sombre evergreen, one  
of the seasons of our interior year (DE 91).

Suffering and sorrow are but one part of a whole of life, life that is not to be divided up.

Rilke also talks of seeing the 'whole' when he says

...the forms of the here and now are not merely to be used in a time limited way  
but...instead within those superior significances in which we share...Not within a  
Beyond...but within a whole, within the Whole...(DE 157).

As in the Perspective-thesis, the 'meaning of the whole of life' does not reside in a 'beyond' or in something 'above' or 'behind' what is to be found in the events encountered in this world. For Rilke, to think in this way derives from the deficiencies of the human condition and the way it perceives itself.

In the Elegies the 'Angels' are one image used to portray what is wrong with the human condition. They are not used as a Christian symbol but as an example of a state of existence without the divisions that characterize the nature of human life; for example, they comprehend life and death not as opposites but as composing a single unity. Rilke wrote to his Polish translator

...affirmation of life and death reveals itself as one...We must try to achieve the greatest possible consciousness of our existence...The true form of life extends through both regions...There is neither a here nor a beyond, but only the great unity, in which the "Angels", those beings who surpass us, are at home (DE 110).

Significantly, the Angels' condition is one of the most acute form of independence of the world. Nothing affects them. They are immune to supplication by any other creature.

Another example in Rilke in which seeing in terms of the whole of life involves an independence of the world is to be found in Sonnets to Orpheus. The thirteenth sonnet of the second group begins:

Sei allem Abschied voran, als ware er hinter  
dir, wie die Winter, der eben geht.

Denn unter Wintern ist einer so endlos Winter,  
dass, uberwinternd, dein Herz uberhaupt ubersteht.

[Be ahead of all parting, as if it were behind you, like the winter that's just on its way out. For among winters, one is so endlessly winter that, having made it through the winter, your heart survives after all] (RMRB 161).

A good explanation of this passage in its context is given by Brodsky: '...do not wait for events to catch up with you. Exercise your human will...Do not be overcome by partings, but seek them, severing ties before they are severed for you by circumstance. Do not fear growth, or solitude or death' (RMRB 161). Rilke's self-concern manifests itself in his hope



that one's '...heart survives after all'; that the self's integrity will remain intact after the parting.

Note that we here have a more intense sense of independence of the world than that found in the Perspective-thesis. Here, independence is not merely a matter of accommodating oneself when circumstance intrudes; it can also involve a severing of ties before circumstance intervenes. Brodsky talks of Rilke as a man '...whose whole life was a series of partings, from people he loved or who loved him, from situations that offered warmth and protection' (RMRB 161). He felt that call to break away for the sake of his dedication to Art, to the creative moment that was the distilled state of pure independence of all contingencies.

A final example of independence of the world in Rilke is to be found in his novel The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge. This lacks a conventional plot and is essentially the reaction of a young, self-absorbed, isolated, Danish poet, to life and suffering in urban Paris. Malte finally achieves some sort of ability to continue living. The nature of his stance towards the world is reflected in the parable of the Prodigal Son about whom he writes:

...he had detached himself from the accidents of fate...From the roots of his being there sprang the sturdy, evergreen plant of a fertile joy. He was wholly engrossed in learning to handle what constituted his inner life (The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge, trans. J. Linton, London: Hogarth Press, 1950, 241. Originally published in 1910).

Again, this is an inner life that secures detachment from contingencies.

A final example of the Weltbild of self-concern is to be found in Emerson.

Emerson stressed that greatness (genius) is not the capacity to alter the world but to bring about our adaptation to it by our state of mind. Harmony with the World is attainable for us by virtue of our capacity to inwardly attain a sense of the world as a whole. Such a

sense is most readily grasped through immersion in Nature.

There I feel that nothing can befall me in life - no disgrace, no calamity...which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all (RWE CW 10).

These passages are close to Wittgenstein's idea of absolute safety and the view of things from eternity. The transparent eye-ball image is a perceptual image just like the idea of a perspective on things sub specie aeternitatis.

This same strain of thought is exhibited in his commendation of 'Idealism' over what he calls 'popular faith'. His idealism

...sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events...not as one painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity, for the contemplation of the soul. Therefore the soul holds itself off from too trivial and microscopic study of the universal tablet...It is not hot and passionate at the appearance of what it calls its own good or bad fortune...No man is its enemy. It accepts whatever befalls, as part of its lesson. It is a watcher more than a doer, and it is a doer, only that it may better watch (RWE CW 36).

In his essay 'Self-Reliance' Emerson further takes up the theme of an insight that enables 'abandonment to the nature of things'.

Emerson ends the essay 'Nature' with the stress on the need to be '...resolute to detach every object from personal relations' (RWE CW 44). Just as Wittgenstein's independence of the world involves an apartness - in the sense of a lack of dependence - from people, so is such apartness also found in Emerson:

To be brothers, to be acquaintances - master or servant, is then a trifle or a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained or immortal beauty (RWE CW 10).

For Emerson this requires us to '...build therefore your own world' (RWE CW 45).

The pronounced individualistic nature of this is seen when we consider an entry from Emerson's Journal of 21 December 1823:

Who is he that shall control me? Why may I not act and speak and think with entire freedom...Who hath forged the chains of Wrong and Rights, of Opinion and Custom? And must I wear them? Is Society my anointed King? Or is there any mightier community or any man or more than man, whose slave I am? I am solitary in the vast society of beings; I consort with no species; I indulge no sympathies. I see the world, human, brute and inanimate nature; and I am in the midst of them, but not of them...I see cities and nations and witness passions - ...the yell of their grief...touches no cord in me; their fellowships and fashion, lusts and virtues, the words and deeds they call glory and shame - I disdain them all. I say to the Universe...thou art not my mother...Star by star, world by world, system by system shall be crushed - but I shall live. (Quoted in Richard Geldard, The Vision of Emerson, Rockport, MA: Element, 1995, 11).

This defiant independence of the world is indicative of some strains in the Weltbild of self-concern.

Before concluding this section it is appropriate to point out that the notion of independence of the world through seeing it as a whole, which underlies Weltbild of self-concern, drew on earlier romanticist ideas. Indeed, we find strains of the Weltbild in Rousseau. In the Reveries the latter's rejection of externally imposed restraint becomes a desire for a kind of integrity that protects the self against external intrusions. 'Having lost all hope in this life...I learned to feed on my own substance, looking within me for all its

pasturage'. As he retreated into himself on the Isle Saint Pierre, Rousseau found that the ...mind became like crystal, emptied of all disturbing images. The boundaries of self...became a delicate rhythm, a gentle interpretation of thought and object, seer and seen: "What do we enjoy at such a moment? Nothing outside us, nothing if not ourselves and our own existence; as long as this feeling continues, we are self-sufficient, like God". (Paul Zweig The Heresy of Self-Love (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, 164).

In this self-sufficiency the self '...sees and feels nothing but the unity of all things' (Rousseau, Reveries of a Solitary Walker, trans. Peter France, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979, 108). He is '...free and virtuous, superior to fortune and man's opinion, and independent of all circumstances' (The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. J.M. Cohen, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953, 332.). This state of being independent of all circumstances is attained, in Rousseau (as in Emerson and others imbued with the Weltbild of self-concern) by psychological, as well as physical, distance from others - shaking off the 'yoke of friendship as well as that of public opinion' (Confessions 338).

In conclusion, this section has sought to provide examples from Wittgenstein's 'surrounding' culture and to show how the Perspective-thesis can be understood as rooted in a certain form of self-concern.

What remains to be done in the next sections of this chapter is to show how the other theses of the Wittgensteinian position are linked to and founded on such a Weltbild of self-concern.

#### **4. The Absoluteness and Anti-Consolation Theses and the Weltbild of Self-Concern**

There is a connection between the Absoluteness-thesis, which holds that self-renouncing faith is an end in itself, and the Weltbild of self-concern.

Kant's emphasis on self-perfection helps us to see how this connection holds. 'If there were no (duties to oneself) then there would be no duties whatsoever...since...I am necessitated by my own pure practical reason...(and am)...the necessitating subject in relation to myself (The Doctrine of Virtue, trans. Mary J. Gregor, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964, 80). Ethics for Kant is ultimately not what is done to others but a matter of the motivation of the self that acts. The scope of this motivation is the crucial thing.

The autonomously motivated self is that which alone can bring about the ethical. The ethical is the work of such a self, the fruit of its self-perfection. Kant says that '...it is not in so far as he is subject to the law that he has sublimity, but rather in so far as, in regard to this very same law, he is at the same time its author and is subordinated to it only on this ground' (Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. H.J. Paton and entitled The Moral Law, London: Hutchinson, 1948, 107).

There is a point of comparison in the way Kant has the good will as good without qualification and the Weltbild of self-concern has the reaction of the self as an end in itself. Both centre on the response of a subject rather than focus on any form of object. (In the Absoluteness-thesis, what is an end-in-itself is not God but the 'believing' of the believer).

This response of the subject is something forged by the self in a way that precludes what happens in the world affecting the genuineness of ethical value (Kant) or self-renouncing independence of the world (proponents of the Weltbild). The evaluation of the self's orientation to the world does not depend on what Bernard Williams calls 'moral luck', that is, on what is outside the self's control and subject to contingencies (Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 20-39). The ethical is discontinuous with the world.

This discontinuity between the ethical and everything else connects with the division between what is an end in itself (something absolute) and what is merely conducive to some further end. The very model presupposing and incorporating such a division belongs to a conception of an absolute value in which the self's reactions are what give shape and form to the idea of 'the ethical'. It assumes an ideal in which the self can muster the integrity and autonomy to affirm some things as of value wholly irrespective of what they yield to the self in terms of their propensity to satisfy inclinations or desires or relative ends in the world.

The terminology of the ethical as for the sake of goodness alone was widely taken up in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard held that the ethical '...reposes immanently in itself, it has nothing without itself which is its telos, but is itself telos for everything outside it...' (Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death, trans. and notes by W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, 64). Feuerbach used this terminology to criticise traditional Christianity with its metaphysical conception of God.

(I)n the (believer) good works do not proceed from essentially virtuous dispositions. It is not love, not the object of love, man, the basis of all morality, which is the motive for his good works. No! He does good not for the sake of goodness itself, not for the sake of man, but for the sake of God; out of gratitude to God who has done all for him...He forsakes sin because it wounds God...his benefactor. The idea of virtue here is the idea of compensatory sacrifice...the greater is the abnegation, the greater is the virtue (EC 260).

The Christian is accused of loving others not for their own sake but as an avenue to his own salvation. Christian love is here said to be something inherently in pursuit of relative ends: a method of winning favour from a metaphysical benefactor.

Once the idea of absoluteness is recognised as conjoined to the reactions of an autonomous subject, it is difficult - if not impossible - to introduce any meaningful necessary place for a metaphysical dimension to religion. This point will be left for discussion when we come to deal with the Anti-Justification thesis. But it is worth noting that the integrity of the self presupposed by exemplars of the Weltbild of self-concern, an integrity able to embrace absolute ends supposedly untouched by self-interest, was fully in keeping with a Feuerbachian rejection of orientation to a metaphysical dimension.

Hofmannsthal, Trakl, Rilke and Emerson do not, so far as I can find, utilise the terminology of relative versus absolute ends. Yet all, in their own way, seek an orientation to the world that is complete in itself and not a means to some further end.

In Tolstoy there is an explicit reference to the Kantian framework. In a key passage illustrating this, he begins by saying:

A person acts according to his faith not because he believes in things unseen, nor because he works to achieve things hoped for...but because, having defined his position in the world, it is natural for him to act according to it... (C 97).

In other words, religion is not about factual beliefs related to quasi-empirical states of affairs nor an attempt to achieve separately specifiable ends. Rather, it is something that naturally springs from a particular relation to the world as a whole. The term 'relationship to the universe' is explained in Tolstoy's essay 'Religion and Morality (C 129-150). Tolstoy claims there are three, and only three, forms of relationship to the universe. The first consists in a person existing in the world for the purpose of attaining the greatest possible personal well-being. The second relationship involves recognizing the meaning of life not in the well-being of one individual but in that of the family, the tribe, the state or some other aggregate of people. The third relationship to the universe - the Christian, which is also found among 'the Pythagoreans, Therapeutae, Buddhists, Brahmins, Epictetus, Seneca

and Marcus Aurelius and not always seen in official Christianity (C 143; C 140) - consists of self-sacrificing service to the will of God.

Tolstoy insists that every person has a relationship to the universe and therefore a religion. It is not possible to prove to a person whose life is lived within another type of relation to the world '...that he must deny himself...simply because it is necessary and worthy and a categorical imperative' (C 97). Self-renouncing faith is, for Tolstoy, akin to a Kantian categorical imperative. It arises from one form of relation to the world and is absolute in that it is not subject to assessment in terms of further ends.

Tolstoy also emphasizes how the good can only ultimately be traced to and said to exist in the individual. '(A)ll the things which are commonly considered good are worthless' (C 391). What has genuine value cannot exist as something socially valuable because people's self-interest would arise and pollute it. It would become something that was merely valued as a means to social esteem and prestige. What is of absolute value must exist within the individual and be mediated through that individual's relationship to the universe as a whole.

The Anti-Consolation thesis reinforces the Absoluteness of the ethical/ religious orientation to the world. For if this orientation were maintained on the basis of consolation and inclination, it would cease to be an absolute. Moreover, the self's stance of independence of the world would be compromised: the self would then be tied to the world, would demand of the world to provide the realisation of its inclinations. In this we see how the Weltbild of self-concern requires that consolation has no place as a motivating force for religious belief. Tolstoy says: 'We are not attracted to genuine belief by the wellbeing the believer is promised but by something which manifests itself as the only recourse to deliverance' (C 220). Believing for the sake of the superficial consolation of a sense of wellbeing is inauthentic.



It would be a mistake to interpret this latter passage as implying that the believer is motivated to get something - namely deliverance - out of believing. For Tolstoy is not talking about a range of options from which the potential believer chooses the most attractive. He is talking about someone who comes to a particular relation with the universe, a relation in which the usual worldly standards are seen as exposed and hollow. For such an individual there is only one direction he can follow: the stance of an absolute acceptance of the claims deriving from his relation to the world. In other words, deliverance is not a matter of the most acceptable among a set of options. Rather, deliverance for Tolstoy is that absolute response which derives from a particular relation to the world.

One illustration of this can be got from the story 'Master and Man'. It is a story of how the rich, exploitative merchant Vasili Andreevich and his meek peasant servant Nikita become lost in the snow. Gradually, as their plight becomes ever more hopeless Vasili Andreevich's entire relationship to the world changes. His motivation for undertaking the dangerous journey was the hope of making money on a good deal. The life of his servant was something superfluous to him. But in the confrontation with the inevitability of death Vasili Andreevich undergoes a change in his entire relationship to the universe. Ensuring his sick servant survives the terrifying cold becomes the meaning of his life. There is no reference to any afterlife whereby Vasili Andreevich can recoup some benefit for the sacrifice made. In accepting religion and the claim of serving his fellow man, Vasili Andreevich can not be said to seek consolation. The initial terror at the impending loss of everything he had hitherto lived for has unsettled him; it has brought him to a new relationship to the world. But that relationship is not something sought in order to secure consolation. Rather, any sense of peace he gets from the new relationship to the world is merely a consequence of that realignment to the world. It is not the motivation for that realignment.

## 5. The Unreflectiveness-Thesis and the Weltbild of Self-Concern

The idea that selflessness requires a stance of unreflectiveness is deeply linked to the Weltbild of self-concern and had roots in the culture surrounding it.

Schopenhauer held it is neither necessary nor possible for an intelligent man to believe in the literal truth of religious doctrines. In contrast to knowledge involving concepts of empirical relations - which have their application in connection with seeking the satisfaction of the affirmative will - Schopenhauer posited another form of knowledge. This is a knowledge acquired through art or even through suffering, a knowledge '...that cannot be communicated, but must dawn on each of us. It therefore finds its real and adequate expression not in words, but simply and solely in deeds, in conduct, in the course of a man's life' (WWR I 370).

A further parallel to the Unreflectiveness-thesis is to be found in the work of Kierkegaard. Unreflectiveness seems to be assumed in Kierkegaard's Abraham (in Fear and Trembling). Alastair Hannay says that this 'knight of faith' acts in 'absolute isolation (for) (w)hatever Abraham might say in explanation of his action, he cannot say why he should be willing to do just this in order to prove his faith' (Kierkegaard, London: Routledge, 1982, 55). In other words, Abraham's faith is presented as an immediate, unreflective response totally lacking any deliberative accompaniment. Elsewhere, Kierkegaard says that Christianity '...refuses to be understood and...the maximum of understanding which could come in questions is to understand that it cannot be understood' (Concluding Unscientific Postscript, trans. D. Swensen, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941, 191). I think the best way to understand this passage is that suggested by Phillips (FAF 275). Kierkegaard is speaking of an understanding. But it is not an understanding that something which could be understood cannot be understood. Rather, it is an understanding in the sense that we come to something in relation to which

'understanding' is not the appropriate response.

This idea is clearly paralleled in Tolstoy: 'I want to understand in such a way that everything inexplicable presents itself to me as necessarily inexplicable...' (C 78). As we saw in the last section, Tolstoy saw religion as a matter not of beliefs enshrined in language but of one's relation to the universe. The absoluteness of that relationship is seen in his insistence that philosophy and science cannot establish man's relationship to the universe.

Neither philosophy nor science is able to establish man's relationship to the universe, because this relationship must be established before any kind of philosophy or science can begin (C 139).

Consider also the following:

A person cannot discover through any sort of movement the direction in which he ought to move...In just the same way it is impossible in philosophy to use mental effort to determine the direction in which such efforts should be made...(C 138).

It is in the nature of movement that it is carried out in a direction; but movement is not itself the determinant of what that direction should be. (Compare Winch's statement that philosophy is unable to tell a man what he should believe just as geometry is unable to tell him where he should stand - see (EA 191)). Similarly, mental effort inevitably has a direction; but the particular course that takes cannot be used to adjudicate or judge the adequacy of mental effort. Mental effort automatically proceeds to establish the self's relation to the world. But no amount of linguistically enshrined analytical mental effort can assess that relation.

Not only does Tolstoy insist that it is impossible to justify through reason the superiority of one form of relation to the universe to another, he also stresses that the attempt to do so is often fraught by self-interest. The Father Sergius example discussed in Chapter 1 is one example of this. This theme also permeates the late novel Resurrection.

The central character of that novel, Nekhlyudov, sees again the woman who through his seduction in youth has been brought to living as a prostitute. Tolstoy dissects in detail how both his repentance and her reaction to his offers to help her are steeped in self-interest. Maslova justified to herself why she should not respond. The view of life she had consciously adopted was that sexual intercourse was the highest good for all men, and that she had it in her power to provide, or not provide, that good. 'Maslova prized this view of life more than anything...because if she were to change her idea of life she would lose the importance it accorded her...'. This process of justifying the world-view that is most congenial to individual self-importance is carried out by virtually every character in the book.

For Tolstoy religion held as a system of beliefs involves pride. Consider the following from The Gospel in Brief, a work that captivated Wittgenstein when he read it during the First World War:

(I)t is a supreme degree of pride... to assert that a particular is a divine revelation...(N)othing more arrogant can be said than that the words spoken by me are uttered through me by God...(It is)...the avowal of oneself as in possession of the sole indubitable truth...(reproduced in ed. W. Gareth Jones, I Cannot Be Silent: Tolstoy's Writings on Politics, Art and Religion, Bristol: Bristol University Press, 1989, 65).

To attain the right relation to the universe requires oproshchatsia, that is, making oneself simple (see E.B. Greenwood, Tolstoy: The Comprehensive Vision, London: Methuen, 1980, 37). 'No arguments could convince me of the truth of (the peasants') faith. Only actions...could convince me' (C 58). Being in the right relationship to the universe is what matters, not any belief or any linguistic expression of faith [2]. One must perform deeds associated with religious life in order to understand. Any reflective linguistic attempt at

understanding defeats the prospect of achieving the selflessness that is sought.

In the Lord Chandos Letter Hofmannsthal may be seen as coming close to some ideas underlying the Unreflectiveness-thesis. Part of the crisis detailed in that work concerns the poets's insecurity about the power of language to convey meaning. Rilke went through a similar phase between 1899-1907; he responded by seeking to avoid as far as possible terms naming objects, trying instead to convey their 'spirit' and avoiding definitions. What is significant about Hofmannsthal is the way he connects confidence about the power of language with self-security.

Lord Chandos is saying that during the period before his crisis, he had no doubt about the ability of language to adequately name and capture the essence of objects and of the world. But he now finds that that period was one of self-orientated self-confidence: '...in all expression of Nature I felt myself....everywhere I was in the centre of it, never suspecting mere appearance...I felt myself the one capable of seizing...each creature (as a )...key to all the others' (LLC 132). On this view, linguistic concepts provide a comforting sense of attachment of the self to the world. The crisis of meaning that he undergoes disrupts him from this state of self-security. In response to it he develops a self-effacing way of being in the world, 'an existence...lacking in...thought' (LLC 135), a '...mysterious, wordless, and boundless ecstasy' (LLC 139), a '...new and hopeful relationship with the whole of existence...' (LLC 138). Like Wittgenstein (TLP 6.4311; NB entry for 8.7.16), he sees this in terms of living in the present: 'the Present, the fullest, most exalted Present'.

As we have already seen, Rilke wanted to inculcate in his readers an unreflective, non-linguistic apprehension of the world around us in all its transience. The second of the Duino Elegies contains several points on the transience of man. As Leishman summarizes, the very identity of man 'from moment to moment is as a vapour that vanishes' (DE 111). Man is urged to reflect and to strive to achieve an attitude which will still more deeply

reconcile (him) to the fact of...transitoriness, into the unity of life and death and the complementariness of sorrow and joy' (DE 104). Such an attitude is achieved by attentiveness to the things and relationships that surround us. In the first of the Elegies these include the 'tree on a slope, to be looked at day after day', 'yesterday's walk', and the ingrained habit that has stayed with us. There is also the star waiting to be perceived, the wave that 'would rise in the past towards you', and the sound of a violin through an open window 'utterly giving itself'.

Many a star  
was waiting for you to perceive it; many a wave  
would rise in the past towards you; or else, perhaps,  
as you went by an open window, a violin would  
be utterly giving itself. All this was commission.  
But were you equal to it? Were you not still  
distraught by expectancy, as though all were announcing  
some beloved's approach...(DE 27).

Expectancy is incompatible with this attitude. Expectancy involves some sort of reflective awareness of possibilities, possibilities that contribute to the self's craving for continual stimulation. Rilke is directing us to cultivate an attitude without expectancy and without the self-centred reflective stance towards the world that makes expectancy possible. This implies a state very like Wittgenstein's idea of living in the present.

Emerson's transparent eye-ball image is a visual image. The stance towards the world he is concerned with is an unreflective one. The opaqueness of selfhood, which so colours the perception of the world, is removed and all can be viewed without its intrusive discolouration. Emerson was an early student of eastern philosophies. This influenced his thought profoundly and led to his moving away from the doctrinal definitions of his

Unitarian background to a view of religion as a way of being orientated to the world. As Alan D. Hodder says: 'As in Buddhist philosophy, the distinctions in Emerson's essays between theology and practice simply collapsed' ('After a High Negative Way: Emerson's Self-Reliance', Harvard Theological Review 84, 1991, 445).

In the poem 'Kaspar Hauser Lied' Trakl strives to convey the total unreflective openness of the innocent boy found at the age of sixteen, having been locked away in total isolation and near darkness all his life. Trakl's poem is based on a novel by Wasserman and was written while Trakl had begun probationary military service as a pharmacist in the garrison hospital at Innsbruck in 1912. At times he verged onto near absolute despair, describing the city as brutal and vulgar.

And when I think, moreover, that an alien will will perhaps cause me to suffer here for a decade, I can fall into a convulsion of tears of the most desperate hopelessness...I will...always be a poor Kaspar Hauser (From a letter quoted in PM 123).

Note here Trakl's reference to an 'alien will' and the sense of this will as external violation into the self's domain. This is close in both terminology and sense to the alien will in Wittgenstein's Notebooks (NB 73 ff.). Though in Trakl's case the alien will is probably something more tangible, namely, the military authorities which he, in his deteriorating psychological condition, felt wholly subjected to.

In the opening stanza we find Kaspar's uncomplicated relationship to his environment.

Er wahrlich liebte die Sonne, die purpurn den Hugel hinabstieg,  
Die Wege des Walds, den singenden Schwarzvogel  
Und die Freude des Gruns.

Ernsthaft war sein Wohnen im Schatten des Baums

Und rein sein Antlitz.

Gott sprach eine sanfte Flamme zu seinem Herzen:

O Mensch!

[He verily loved the sun which, purple, descended the hill/ The paths of the wood,  
the singing blackbird/ And the joy of the green// Earnestly he lived in the shadow  
of the tree/ And his countenance was pure./ God spoke a soft flame to his heart:/ O  
Man! (PM 126)].

Kaspar, the child raised in the darkness, loves the light of the sun and all the beauty of the natural world which he had long been denied. In the Wasserman novel, Kaspar's tutor had been trying to introduce the concept of God to his mind. But the boy was unable to grasp anything beyond his immediate experience and replied 'Kaspar loves the sun'. Trakl begins the poem with this allusion. Kaspar's relationship to the word is totally unreflective. Therefore, it seems to follow immediately for Trakl, his countenance is pure. 'God spoke a soft flame to his heart/ O Man' - here God's words of recognition find their way to his heart and not to any intellectual faculty. Trakl aspired for Kaspar's pure quality of being which can passively embrace the shadow of the murderer:

Nachts blieb er mit seinem Stern allein;

Sah, daß Schnee fiel in Kahles Gezweig

Und im dämmernden Hausflur den Schatten des Mörders.

Silbern sank des Ungebornen Haupt hin.



[Nights he remained with his star alone;/ Saw, that snow fell into bare branches/  
And in the hall's half-light, the shadow of the murderer. / Silver the head of the  
unborn one sank away (PM 126)].

His head sinks away without resistance or trace of perturbation. He is unruffled by any hint of an 'alien will'. He is the unborn one because of his lack of craving to hold onto his place in this world.

To summarise, the basic elements of the Unreflectiveness-thesis are to be found among exemplars of the Weltbild of self-concern.

#### **6. The Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence Thesis and the Weltbild of Self-Concern**

According to this thesis, reflection involves consolation for the self. Authentic belief is therefore unreflective: it involves a virtuous state of absence of self. Conversely, doubt involves reflection and is a matter of self-assertion. This connects with the thought of exemplars of the Weltbild of self-concern when we recall that the term 'belief' in the Wittgensteinian position is not related to propositions; it is a certain form of attitude to the world, an attitude involving selflessness.

This form of attitude has precedents in the idea of a category of knowledge at variance with self-aggrandizement.

In section 5 we noted how Schopenhauer posited a form of knowledge different from that involving concepts of empirical relations - which have their application in connection with utility and seeking the satisfaction of the affirmative will. A knowledge '...that cannot be communicated, but must dawn on each of us. A knowledge that finds its real and adequate expression not in words, but simply and solely in deeds, in conduct, in the course of a man's life' (WWR I 370). Such knowledge is what fuels all compassionate conduct; all such conduct ultimately stems from a penetration of the principium individuationis, the

mistaken idea that there is a true essence of selfhood linked to individual personality. This knowledge leaves our own individual interests entirely on one side.

As we have seen, Tolstoy believed that the peasants possessed a superior knowledge to that of the Russian upper classes. This was supposedly manifested in the peasants' ability to live without attachment to pleasures and without concern for the fact that individual life ends in death and total oblivion. Their right relationship to the universe is an expression of such knowledge. The late story 'What Men Live By' (1881) is about the wisdom found among the peasants, the wisdom that 'all men live not by care for themselves but by love'. The upper classes, Tolstoy believed, lacked this virtuous knowledge: their relationship to the world was one solely based on grasping for the maximum of satisfactions. Religious scepticism among the upper classes, as well as superstitious reliance on rituals, both derived from ignorance. Religious sceptics, far from being 'advanced', were really caught in a primitive relationship to the world centred on securing pleasure. They were as backward as the most superstitious practitioner of rituals.

Hofmannsthal also thought in terms of a knowledge that involves selflessness. H.A. Hammelmann describes it as a '...healing knowledge of the essential wholeness of existence' (HAH 23). As we saw in the last section, this involved a recognition that the self is not at the centre of things.

Similarly, Rilke sought to inspire an ability to accept transience, a capacity to appreciate the beauty of the moment. In such appreciation the self appears to retract.

In Emerson we find the idea of a form of knowledge that can accommodate itself to the world, giving up the self's own projects and plans.

As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever to so much as his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin, it is flint...(I)n proportion as a man has anything in him divine, the firmament flows before him...Not he is great

who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind (RWE CW 64).

It is the attributes we bring to the world, our state of mind, which ultimately determines its fluidity. To the ignorant, the world is seen as rigid and immovable. But that rigidity is a consequence of their sinful self-orientation and desire to see their plans being imposed on the world.

Trakl's Kaspar Hauser is the 'pure' one, virtuous because he has no place in a society living on its infatuation with power. In tune with bush and animal, he loves the sun and the glory of nature.

Stille fand sein Schritt die Stadt am Abend;

Die dunkle Klage seines Munds:

Ich will ein Reiter werden.

[Silently, his step found the city in the evening. / The dark lament of his mouth: /

I want to become a rider (PM 126)].

The phrase 'I want to become a rider' derives from Wasserman's novel. The boy had been taught one phrase by his keeper: 'I want to become a horseman like my father'. In Trakl this is referred to as a 'dark lament'; it is the one assertion of personal desire that the boy has and hence is dark. Of course, this has been implanted in him and does nothing to mar Kaspar's total selfless openness to his surrounding world.

The idea of a knowledge that involves selflessness permeates the Weltbild of self-concern. This helps us account for the Belief-Virtue element, but what of the Doubt-Vice side of the thesis?

The idea that religious doubt involves a lack of such a knowledge, and therefore is to be construed as self-orientated, is most directly paralleled in Tolstoy. For him, to fail to have the Christian relationship to the world meant that one stood in another relationship to

the universe. Since he held that there are only two other alternatives to the Christian relationship, and since he defined these in terms of either direct self-interest or of selfishness in support of one's own tribe or interest group (see section 4 of this chapter), he implies that the non-Christian standpoint is a vice.

The other exemplars of the Weltbild of self-concern that I have pointed to do not utilise as explicitly as Tolstoy the idea of a vice being involved. However, it is clear that they imply that there is something defective about not being in the kind of selfless state they see as ideal. Thus, for Emerson, greatness is a matter of the right attitude of mind with regard to contingencies. To fail to have the attitude of mind he isolates is to have some other, more lowly and subservient, variation. Similarly, Rilke sees something pathetic about the inability to accept transience and to see the glory in the here and now. For Schopenhauer, not to have the special kind of knowledge he is concerned about is to be isolated from the foundation of morality which is a particular form of compassion. Trakl uses the term dark about expressions of personal desire: the virtue of Kasper Hauser consists in the absence of such 'dark laments'. Darkness is a traditional characterisation of vice and sin. This implies that there is something sinful about not being in a Kaspar-like stance to the world.

To conclude, we can recognise the rootedness of the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis in the Weltbild of self-concern.

## **7. The Passivity-Implication and the Weltbild of Self-Concern**

The Passivity-Implication has two facets. First, the idea that a perspective-shift is something the self, caught in its conceptually endowed passivity, undergoes rather than something it has any part in bringing about. Secondly, a consequent question as to the reality of the self. These facets are found in the Weltbild of self-concern.

Tolstoy's view of religion as a matter of the self's relation to the universe as a whole seems to lend itself to both the above facets of the Passivity-Implication. Recalling the characters Ivan Illych, Vasili Andreevich in 'Master and Man' and Nekhlyudov in Resurrection, we can wonder just what it was that made for the change in their relation to the universe. In the case of Ivan Illych and Vasili Andreev, suffering and the experience of the inevitability of death were the background features. In Nekhlyudov's case, it was a sense of guilt at seeing the ruin that his egotism had caused. But in all three cases, the changed relationship to the world is something sudden; it is also something inexplicable, at least in the sense that it is far from clear just how it came about with reference to the individual personality involved. In fact, Tolstoy's own mid-life crisis was something that his Confession portrays in just this way.

That such change leaves us with a sense of puzzlement is not incidental. It is fundamental to the Weltbild of self-concern, as mentioned previously, that the self is subject to infringements from outside which threaten to overwhelm it completely, even erase it. That the change from one relation to the world to another should also be seen as such an externally derived occurrence is really consonant with the basic element in this model, namely the obsessive concern with the view of self as liable to be subjugated by what is 'outside'.

The ultimate price of securing the relation to the universe that Tolstoy calls 'Christian', is peasant-like simplicity. And if we ask what sort of simplicity this is, we find a selflessness without ties to others and without a clear self-identity. At least not a self-identity marked by individuality and a name. Among all the peasant characters mentioned in Tolstoy's work there is one that illustrates the form of living that this view requires if taken to its logical limits. In Resurrection Nekhluydov meets the wandering peasant with no religion and no name: 'They think I'm going to call myself by a name...But I don't give

myself no name. Renounced everything I 'ave: got no name, no home, no country, no nothing' (536).

Both Hofmannsthal and Rilke had some apprehension of that facet of the Passivity-thesis which has to do with the subsumption of the self in its conceptual background as provided by language. They were, at various stages in their development, brought to experience the way in which the self is tied into, determined in what it can perceive, by linguistic concepts. Their reaction to this was the aspiration to break out of the restraint which this imposed. They sought to invoke the 'spirit' of objects without relying on the conceptual terms usually associated with them. Thus Rilke, in his Neue Gedichte (c. 1907) sought what Graff calls a '...willed detachment, of alleged self-effacement' before objects (RMRG 157). Hofmannsthal in the Lord Chandos letter, as we have seen in previous sections, dramatised the loss of faith in the ability of conceptual language to capture the 'essence' of things.

It might be objected that there is here a difference from the Wittgensteinian position, at least in so far as the latter would probably hold that it is nonsensical to talk of non-conceptual apprehension, that is, an attribution of awareness of something by a subject outside that subject's conceptual background. (That the above poets did not delve into this is due to the fact that their concerns were not philosophically sophisticated, nor even philosophical at all). However, the point at issue here is that both views do imply the 'constraining' effect of concepts: the self is subjugated by them in so deep a way that its apprehension of what is before it is fundamentally determined by the linguistic conceptual framework to which it is intimately tied. This is a clear parallel to the first facet of the Passivity-Implication.

Both Hofmannsthal and Rilke confront the issue of the unreality of the self. In the essay 'Der Dichter und diese Zeit' Hofmannsthal called the poet the 'silent brother of all

things' (HAH 14). This takes the form of saturating his individuality with the forms of existence lived by other people, and also objects, and achieving an extreme type of self-identification with them. He himself saw this as involving a 'lack of character'. This is one route to the unreality of the self found in a passage already quoted from 'Stanzas in Terza Rima':

...that unhindered my own self could flow

Out of a little child whom now I find

Remote as a dumb dog, and scarcely know (HHP 26).

The self is something that flows out of events; it is carried along and transformed into something else. And the selves that emerge transiently from such outflows have no real connection with each other.

There is also Hofmannsthal's image of the self infested by dreams.

Wir sind aus solchem Zeug wie das zu Träumen...

Das Innereste ist offen ihrem Weben;

Wie Geisterhände in versperrtem Raum

Sind sie in uns und haben immer Leben.

Und drei sind Eins: ein Mensch, ein Ding, ein Traum.

[We are such stuff as dreams are made on...Our innermost life is open to their weaving; / Like ghostly hands in a locked room they team / Within us, always living and conceiving. / And three are one: a man, a thing, a dream (HHP 26)].

Dreams appear to weave into - to actually forge - our inner life. They appear as something foreign. But then, in the last line, this is retracted. For Man, Thing and Dream are really one. This no doubt recalls Ernst Mach's popularisation among the Viennese of the idea that

both the ego and physical objects are merely sensations in the mind.

Rilke's stance on the unreality of the self is novel. In the Duino Elegies he is concerned to transform the sense of the self's unreality. The transience of the self and of all things here, in comparison with the ideal of immovable permanence symbolised in the image of the Angels, is affirmed and praised. For Rilke, transience does not mean unreality. Rather, the fact of impermanence enables him to find a sense of reality all the more vivid. He urges us to praise transience to the Angel:

Tell him things...

Show him how happy a thing can be, how guileless and  
ours;

how even the moaning of grief purely determines on form,  
serves as a thing, or dies into a thing, - to escape  
to a bliss beyond the fiddle. These things that live on departure  
understand when you praise them: fleeting they look for  
rescue through something in us, the most fleeting of all (DE 87).

The moaning of grief, expressed on the violin, has to 'die into a thing', it has to cease because in its ceasing is its form; in that it enter a bliss beyond the fiddle. This form of grief is something that 'lives on departure'. That is how it acquires its being. But this also applies to us. We - the Vergänglichsten, the most fleeting of all - derive our reality through transience. And if we ask how this is so, Rilke appeals to something like Wittgenstein's idea of life in the present:

Look, I am living. On what? Neither childhood nor  
nor future  
are growing less...Supernumerous existence  
wells up in my heart (DE 89).



Rilke is insisting that the self transforms its unreality momentarily when 'Überzahliges Dasein entspringt mir im Herzen', when supernumerous existence wells up in the heart. In other words Rilke seeks to find in the self's unreality the real sense of its reality.

As we saw in the last section, in Emerson the passivity of the self relates to its capacity to bend to the course of events in the world. The ultimate state is symbolised in the transparent eye-ball image: it sees the world but is ultimately nothing, neither affecting other people nor affected by them. This point is well put by David Jacobsen: '...all categories that could define subjectivity and objectivity are lost in the sheer manifestation of nature, and the individual is taken to be no more than the occasion of nature present' ('Self-Reliance and Seeing Things As They Are', Studies in Romanticism 29, 1990, 565).

In Trakl's Kaspar Hauser we find a passivity which comes close to the Wittgensteinian position's conceptual moulding of the self. Kaspar lacks most of the conceptual categories which would enable him to fit into the surrounding society in which he lives. He can attain an unreflective contemplation of nature but cannot make any sense of abstractions - such as the concept 'God', which is introduced to him in Wasserman's novel. And as well as this passivity, induced by the sparse conceptual framework, there is also a sense of unreality to his selfhood. In the final line he is described as the 'unborn'. His unreflectiveness is the result of having lived from the beginning outside the rudimentary framework of human relationships which provide self-identity.

The roots of the Passivity-Implication go back deep into the Romantic movement. The Passivity-Implication connects with the Romantic retraction from the self and its displacement by the poetic spirit, an example of which we find in Keats in a letter to Richard Woodhouse in 1818: 'As to the poetical character itself...it has no self. It is everything and nothing. It has no character - it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated...It is a wretched thing to

confess; but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical Nature - how can it when I have no Nature?' (see RMRH 22).

In conclusion, we can recognise elements of the Passivity-Implication in the exemplars of the Weltbild of self-concern.

## **8. The Acceptance-Thesis and the Weltbild of Self-Concern**

In what follows I shall illustrate the four facets of the Acceptance-thesis identified in Chapter 1. For want of space I shall avoid giving examples from each of the main proponents of the Weltbild of self-concern that I have elsewhere drawn attention to, namely Tolstoy, Emerson, Rilke, Hofmannsthal and Trakl. Rather, I will concentrate on representative illustrations only.

### **i. Acceptance of the Non-Centrality of Self**

This emphasis is integral to the Weltbild of self-concern. For example, we find in Tolstoy's War and Peace that Pierre comes to realise that amid the turmoil of events in which he is embroiled (Napoleon's invasion of Russia) he is insignificant. Taken prisoner, he finds his whole being is gradually being erased. Yet he can point to no single individual who is responsible. According to the Tolstoyan view of history, it was '...the system, the concatenation of circumstances' (WAP 1141) that was robbing him of life. Tolstoy rejects those histories which centre on the lives of 'great' individuals who supposedly wield power and control events. He painstakingly illustrates how the most decisive moments in a battle usually occur not through the planning of the generals and field marshals but through the unconscious collective action of the masses. In all this, Tolstoy believes that it is only an illusion to see oneself as at the centre of things.

Yet Tolstoy - like the other proponents of the Weltbild of self-concern - never managed to detach self-concern from the recognition of the non-centrality of the self. For example, in Pierre's acceptance of his place in a vast, impersonal system he finds a '...personal power and strength (which) testify to the existence of a higher criterion of life outside mere human limitation' (WAP 1067). Now this higher criterion is not anything wholly detached from limitation but a means of coming to terms with the self's immersion in such limitation.

In Emerson we also find the idea that there is no in-built and external system which allocates reward and punishment and which the self can utilise to bring itself into a more favourable position of centrality. In the Conduct of Life he says that 'God has delegated Himself to a million deputies' (CL 247). This may suggest that there is an external system, brought about by an external agent, to oversee the allocation of reward and punishment. But talk of 'God' here seems to be no more than part of Emerson's rhetoric. For his target is the view that sees in these very terms of an external system relative to which one can establish - or aspire to establish - oneself. For he ultimately conceives the 'chain' of deputies to be no literal chain at all but a colourful image of how everything culminates in the self and '...reaction of his fault on himself, in the solitary devastation of his mind' (CL 247). To say, as the Buddhist says, 'No seed will die' - or as Emerson himself said in his earlier essay 'Nature', that 'Nothing can befall me in life' - is not a claim about the place of the self in some vast system where reward and punishment are allocated according to proportionate principles. Rather, it is a statement about the character of the 'great man':

He is great, whose eyes are opened to see that the reward of action cannot be escaped, because he is transformed into his action, and taketh its nature, which bears its own fruit like every other tree...A great man cannot be hindered by the effect of his action, because it is immediate...(CL 257).

The great man sees that it is not an external system which rewards actions and so enhances his position of prominence. Rather, he sees that he and the action are, in a sense, one. There is no more central place for him to be other than that which he can attain by himself.

Somewhat ironically, Emerson's emphasis on the self's non-centrality eventually leads him to place self at the centre of things. Carlyle is said to have chastised him: 'We find you...a Soliloquizer on the eternal mountain tops only, in vast solitudes which men and their affairs all lie hushed in a very dim remoteness...' (quoted in T. Tanner, Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 37). Indeed, Emerson's remoteness is not just a remoteness from other men and their concerns. It is an essential distance from any external system, other than that which issues forth from the self's own resources. And that is a form of centrality of self if ever there was one! Though admittedly, it is more complicated a form than that presupposed by 'straightforward' egotism.

#### ii. Acceptance of Pointless Suffering

The proponents of the Weltbild of self-concern stress the need for an acceptance of pointless suffering. But the place of such acceptance in their system of thought is ultimately as an accomplishment in which the self's triumph over the ravages of the external world reaches its zenith.

In War and Peace Tolstoy shows us how Pierre secures an '...inner freedom, independent of external circumstances' (WAP 1307). He learns that

...(M)an is created for happiness, that happiness lies inside him...that all unhappiness is due not to privations but to superfluity... (He also) learned that there is nothing in the world to be dreaded...(WAP 1255).

Note here how Pierre can accept pointless suffering through having secured an independence of the world and an apprehension of absolute safety in which nothing is dreaded. Though he feels that '...blind force...had him in its clutches...he felt too that the harder the fateful force strove to crush him the more did his own individuality assert itself in his soul' (WAP 1206). Pierre can accept pointless suffering because ultimately he holds to the proud hope that it cannot crush him, whatever happens.

This proud capability is paralleled in Emerson, as the distinguished literary critic Harold Bloom enables us to see in his paper 'Emerson: The Glory and Sorrow of American Romanticism' (in eds. D. Thorburn and G. Hartman, Romanticism: Vistas, Instances and Continuities, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1973). Bloom says that the transparent eyeball image (see section in this chapter dealing with the Perspective-thesis) is '...an image impatient with all possibility of loss' (159). Emerson is said to be '...in his...transparent cloud ... chuckling...that "Evil will bless and ice will burn". His conscious glory was solipsistic and...self-castrating' (172). Bloom quotes a long passage from Emerson's journal where the latter claims that our use of the word 'Fate' is a sign of our weakness:

It is a sign of our impotence and that we are not yet ourselves...I know that the whole is here, - the wealth of the Universe is for me...And yet whilst I adore this ineffable life which is in my heart, it will not condescend to gossip with me, it will not announce to me any particulars of science, it will not enter into the details of my biography, and say to me why I have a son and daughters born to me, or why my son dies in his sixth year of joy (173).

Emerson's six year old son died. Here he declares that there is no explanatory scheme that will provide any sense that there is a purpose to such a loss. Our use of the term 'fate' is indicative of our dependence on such an explanatory scheme. That dependence is also a sign

of our impotence; we lack the power to live the truth that 'the whole is here', that in this present is transcendence. Bloom talks, instructively, of the '...program of attaining the transparency, which is...the mode of the Romantic epiphany or privileged moment' (171).

In this privileged moment - this parallel of the Wittgensteinian living in the present - Emerson proclaims that nothing can be taken from us.

Nothing can be taken from us that seems much. All loss, all pain is particular; the universe remains to the heart unhurt. Neither vexations nor calamities abate our trust (From the essay 'Spiritual Laws', reproduced in part in R. Geldard The Vision of Emerson, Rockport MA: Element, 1995, 110).

Thus, for Emerson, the person able to attain the transparency of the privileged moment is '...equal to whatever shall happen' (CL 62).

In Rilke we also find this infatuation with the sense of the powerful autonomy that accompanies the capacity to accept pointless suffering. In his prose piece 'The Young Workman's Letter' Rilke presents his views through the mouth of a fictional character who rejects his girlfriend's conception of God as a 'boss', a powerful agent somehow distinct from the world. For this character the power of God represents not some external force which intrudes into the world but the capacity of the self to accept and thereby - paradoxically perhaps - survive the affliction poured on it by events in life.

One should say to oneself, there is only one power, and should understand the trivial, false, imperfect kind of power as if it were that which claims us rightly. Would it not become innocuous in this way? If one always saw in every kind of power, even in that which is evil, in the last resort the right to be powerful, would one not then survive unharmed, so to say, even by what is unjust and despotic? (RMRSW 73-74).

This state of accepting the intrusion of evil is one in which the self can 'survive unharmed'. It is - we may rightly say - seen as a state of absolute safety.

This same idea that evil is not to be challenged but accepted is found later in Rilke's Duino Elegies. Thus at the beginning of the Tenth Elegy he chastises us for being 'Vergeuder der Schmerzen' (wasters of sorrows) when we try to 'stare away into sad endurance beyond them, trying to foresee their end!' (DE 91). He urges that we embrace sorrow as an essential part of our life. Such an embrace involve a radical acceptance of the present. It involves a realisation that :

...being here is much, and because all this  
that's here, so fleeting, seems to require us and strangely concerns us. Us the most  
fleeting of all. Just once,  
everything, only for once. Once and no more. And we,  
too, once. And never again. But this having been once,  
having been once on earth - can it ever be cancelled? (DE 83).

Thus Rilke, as Tolstoy and Emerson, urges an acceptance of pointless suffering. As in the case of the others, this acceptance is ultimately seen as the sign of the self's having attained a stance of independence from the world, a stance in which it can live immersed in the present and be thereby unharmed.

### iii. Acceptance of the Finality of Death

For the Weltbild of self-concern, accepting the finality of death is another fundamental sign of the self's capacity to be independent of the world and to be able to live in the present. In War and Peace, Pierre's realisation (recounted in the last sub-section) that there is nothing in life to be dreaded involves accepting death as a complete finality to life. That sense of finality is particularly clear in the great story 'The Death of Ivan Illych'. Illych,

a proud and powerful civil servant, is struck down by terminal illness. The story records in detail his gradual decline, his fears, his aloneness, and his agonizing pain. At the end he comes to see that to his question 'Why?' '...there was no answer and could be none...'. With that realisation he has come to accept the finality of death. That same finality is also what Vasilii Andreevich in 'Master and Man' comes to accept before his death in the snow storm. In his preface to The Gospel in Brief (in A Confession and What I Believe, trans. Aylmer Maude, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, 118) Tolstoy wrote: 'The true life is independent of time; it is in the present'. Like the Wittgensteinian idea of living in the present, this involves accepting the finality of death.

Emerson also displays this concern for life lived in the present rather than for any future state transcending death. As we have seen, contact with nature inspires him with the sense that '...nothing can befall me in life' (RWE CW 10). In this state of absolute safety he finds his eternity in the present in which he '...beholds the whole circle of persons and things, of actions and events...as one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity' (RWE CW 36).

As we saw in the last sub-section, Rilke also urges on us a radical concern with the present, rather than any future state. In the ninth of the Duino Elegies he can praise the earth for Death, 'that friendly Death', that 'holiest inspiration', and can proclaim:

Look, I am living. On what? Neither childhood nor  
future  
are growing less...Supernumerous existence  
wells up in my heart (DE 89).

Immersed in the timeless present, looking neither to the past nor the future, the poet can achieve a sense of being unharmed by the vicissitudes and sufferings which threaten. This acceptance of the finality of death is also powerfully exemplified in the death of Christolph



in Rilke's novel The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge. Rilke took over and developed from the Danish writer J.P. Jacobsen the notion of der eigene Tod (authentic death) - a dignified, anti-Christian desire to accept death as a part of life. The currency of such ideas in Wittgenstein's Vienna is most clearly indicated by the cult which sprang up after Weininger's Sex and Character, invigorated by Weininger's own engineered acceptance of death by an act of suicide.

It is worth briefly noting that Schopenhauer also stressed the identity of all present moments throughout time. He says of the happy man that

Nothing can harm him any more...for he has cut all the thousand threads of will that bind him to the world (Quoted in, C. Barrett, Wittgenstein, Ethics and Religious Belief, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 54).

In his essay 'On the Indestructibility of Our Essential Being by Death' he talks of the person who becomes aware of the present as the sole form of reality and becomes clear that it

has its source in us, and thus arises from within and not from without...(Such a person)...cannot doubt the indestructibility of his own being...his existence will not be affected by (death)...for there has been as much reality within him as without (Arthur Schopenhauer: Essays and Aphorisms, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, 69).

The currency of the idea of ultimate value as residing in the present rather than any future state is prevalent in von Hofmannsthal's play Death and the Fool where the speaker realises when close to accepting his own death that:

In eine Stunde kannst du Leben pressen,

Mehr als das ganze Leben konnte halten

[In one hour of life you can compress more life/ Than once the whole of life had

space to hold] (Hugo von Hofmannsthal: Poems and Verse Plays, ed. & int. M. Hamburger, London: Routledge, 1961, 135).

The idea of accepting the present is also found in Goethe, who Wittgenstein admired. For example, in the second part of Faust we find the claim that 'Only in the present is our happiness'. In his 'Elegie' there is the call to look straight at the moment (Augenblick), for then '...so bist du alles, bist unüberwindlich' (you will then be everything and unconquerable). [3]

This final quotation from Goethe summarises the nature of the acceptance of the finality of death prevalent in the Weltbild of self-concern: such acceptance is a route to the unconquerability of the self and is thus ultimately something self-directed in that it is a route to the self's independence of the world.

#### iv. Acceptance Without Seeking Manipulation

In Chapter 1 we saw how the Wittgensteinian position sought to reject the idea of the power of God as that of a force imposed by an external agent. The writers enmeshed in the Weltbild of self-concern display a comparable interest in elucidating a notion of power different from the conventional associated with controlling things.

Emerson says:

All power is of one kind, a sharing of the nature of the world. The mind that is parallel with the law of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength...so that he is equal to whatever shall happen (CL 62).

Power is here understood as the capacity to be 'equal to whatever shall happen'. Being strong with the strength of events is really here the ability to withstand them without being affected. That, in his view, is what power really is. So when he says : 'Life is a search after power...an element with which the world is so saturated...' (CL 59) we can understand this

to mean that the very prevalence of vicissitudes in the world is really a condition for the acquisition of power (as this concept is understood by him).

Emerson's conception of power requires, for its realisation in the self, a passive stance of acceptance. He says it is

...not supplied by any labour...it is like the climate...which no glass or irrigation or tillage can elsewhere rival. It is like the opportunity of a city like New York or Constantinople which needs no diplomacy to force capital or genius to labour to it. They come of themselves (CL 63).

In his essay 'Spiritual Laws' a central tenet of his guidance is the admonition 'Do not choose'. That is the key to independence of events. That applies to relations with people. 'It shall be the same with my friends. I shall never woo the loveliest. I will not ask friendship or favour' (CL 262). The power he aspires to is a self-completeness that does not require supplement from anything external.

We have already seen, in the sub-section dealing with accepting the non-centrality of the self, how Tolstoy describes Pierre's acquisition of a 'personal power and strength'. In that power he finds '...an inner freedom, independent of ...external circumstances' (WAP 1307). But Tolstoy is also aware that people, especially historians, frequently think of 'power' as somehow implanted in the world by strong leaders. But, says Tolstoy, The use of 'power' and 'genius' in connection with supposedly influential historical figures really '...do not denote anything that actually exists...(but)...indicates a certain degree of comprehension of phenomena' (WAP 1342). Moreover, it is a comprehension which fails to realise that really all of life is a 'concatenation of circumstances' (WAP 1141) which no individual can control or influence in any significant way.

In the sub-section on the acceptance of pointless suffering we have already examined an example by Rilke concerning the notion of 'power'. In his prose piece 'The Young

Workman's Letter' the narrator says that the power of God represents not some external force which intrudes into the world but the capacity of the self to accept and 'survive unharmed' the affliction poured on it by events in life.

#### v. Concluding Comments

The Acceptance-thesis, as we have found, stresses a particular form of acceptance of all things. It is a form of acceptance in which the inner integrity of the self - caught in a state of absolute safety and unperturbability - remains unsullied. What acceptance comes to is intimately linked to an aspiration for an inner triumph over the vicissitudes of the world. This is why I can conclude that the Acceptance-thesis also is underlain by a hankering for an independence of the world.

#### **9. The Anti-Justification-thesis and the Weltbild of Self-Concern**

The Anti-Justification thesis stresses that self-renouncing faith involves the acceptance of all things without reference to any metaphysical dimension, either a metaphysical being or a metaphysical realm. In this section I want to show how this derives from the stress on the integrity of the self found in the Weltbild of self-concern.

In general terms, the compatibility can be understood in the following way. Central to the Weltbild of self-concern is the self's stance of, in Wittgenstein's terms, independence of the world. The self is unaffected by the course of events in the world. It has within itself the capacity for detachment from dependence on outcomes. Now it is only a very short step from this to being unaffected by anything external to the self. For one having made this step, not only are outcomes in the world inconsequential to it, but so also are outcomes and situations external to the world. External to the world here means things 'above, beyond or behind' the world, that is, things metaphysical.

As we have seen in previous sections, in Tolstoy genuine religion is not a matter of an orientation to another realm; it is a matter of one's relation to this world as a whole. The Tolstoyan self is capable of an integrity that defies the dependence of the mass of people on a metaphysical conception of religion. The roots of the Anti-Justification thesis are clearly found in this Tolstoyan idea.

We also find Hofmannsthal exemplifying ideas comparable to the Anti-Justification thesis. In the Lord Chandos letter Hofmannsthal rejects the idea of religious metaphysics:

Such ideas...have no power over me: they belong to the cobwebs through which my thoughts dart out into the world, while the thoughts of so many others are caught there and come to rest. To me the mysteries of faith have been condensed into a lofty allegory which arches itself over the fields of my life like a radiant rainbow, ever remote, ever prepared to recede should it occur to me to rush toward it and wrap myself into the folds of its mantle (LLC 133).

Here faith is retained by the subject as no more than an allegory. The integrity of his grasp of it is such that the self is aloof from seeking the security of the 'mantle' of an orientation literally directed to a metaphysical realm. He boldly asserts that such an idea has no power over him.

As we have seen in previous sections, Rilke's work - especially his Duino Elegies - emphasises that we should accept transience and not seek any cancellation of it by way of an extension of the self's duration beyond death or by any sort of instantaneous contact with a realm over and above this one. Accepting the self's transience involves the ultimacy of the here and now, of the single moment.

In Rilke's prose piece, 'The Young Worker's Letter' there is an almost Feuerbachian rejection of the metaphysical in religion:

What deceit to misappropriate pictures of present delight in order to sell them behind our backs to heaven ! Oh, the impoverished earth ought long ago to have called in all these loans which have been drawn on its happiness, so that the Hereafter might be adorned with them. Does death really become less opaque because these lighting devices have been dragged into place behind it? And since a vacuum cannot persist, will not all that has been taken away from earth be replaced by sham...(I)t is an insult to God (I cannot think otherwise) not to see in what is granted and permitted to us here something completely capable of making us happy to the very limit of our senses (RMRSW 69).

The idea here is of abstracting from the beauty of the here and now, thereby diminishing the present, in order to transfer to the Hereafter. This parallels Feuerbach's claim that the diminution of this world as an offering to God is in reality an act of self-affirmation: '...the sensuality which has been renounced is unconsciously restored, in the fact that God takes the place of the material delights which have been renounced' (EC 27). Rilke is saying something not dissimilar: what is taken away from the earth is replaced by 'sham'. It is sham in the sense that ignores its glories and also because it involves debasing them through wanting to have them put elsewhere. And the integrity of self that is Rilke's ideal is able to defy all dependence on such sham.

J.B. Leishman recounts how Rilke first gave expression in his Book of Hours to a religion deriving from a Nietzschean rejection of otherworldliness. The '...God he so frequently invokes has no relation to the God of religion...and the prayers are addressed only to himself' ('Introduction' to Rilke: Selected Poems, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964, 12). Hollingdale gives an interpretation of Nietzsche which enables us to appreciate the nature of this connection with Rilke. Hollingdale claims that we find in Nietzsche an appeal for a

...new mode of transcendence (which) will have to be non-metaphysical...(This will be a)...'will to power'...(that is)...the capacity to transform the divine power over the world into power over oneself...(T)he Übermensch is the supreme advocate of life-affirmation through acceptance of the totality of life and...of the suffering entailed in living (R.J. Hollingdale, 'Introduction' to A Nietzsche Reader, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977, 11).

On this view of Nietzsche, the Übermensch is the one that stands out and is capable of power over self: power to accept this world without dependence on a metaphysical order. This is very close to the emphasis on the integrity of the self and the aspiration for the self no longer to require the need for an external metaphysical realm which we find in the Weltbild of self-concern.

In conclusion, the Anti-Justification thesis can clearly be seen to be comparable to the kind of defiant ideal of the self's integrity that characterises the Weltbild of self-concern.

## 10. Conclusions

We can conclude that all the theses of the Wittgensteinian position can be understood as having their sitz im leben in what I have called the Weltbild of self-concern. This is a late nineteenth century world-view, heavily influenced by a fin de siecle form of neo-romanticism, in which the self is infatuated with its own inner integrity and capacity to achieve an independence from all external contingencies.

This aspiration for independence underlies the Perspective-thesis in the sense that this aims for a self-mastery that defies the experience of meaninglessness and suffering. It underlies the Absoluteness-thesis in that the latter implies that what has absolute value is something secured by the responses of a subject capable of generating its own integrity. In

being able to do this despite all external constraints and without reference to personal consolation it also underlies the Anti-Consolation thesis.

Independence of the world underlies the Unreflectiveness-thesis in that it is through an unreflective view of the whole that there is the capacity to remove the self's dependence on its desires coming to fruition. It underlies the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis in that this implies a certain form of knowledge discontinuous with the unrestrained satisfaction of the self's desirous appetites.

The idea of independence of the world underlies the Acceptance-thesis and the Anti-Justification thesis in that both presuppose a capacity, or at least aspiration, to confront everything in life, including pain, the sense of powerlessness and the termination of the self. Moreover, to do so without reference to anything outside the self, that is, no sense of contact with or inspiration from the sense of the existence of a metaphysical reality.

The idea of independence of the world also connects with the Passivity-Implication. For the state of such independence is associated with the self's passivity, its ultimate unreality and even its determination by the conceptual framework which constitutes language.

We are now clearer as to the type of situation in life - the kind of view of the self's predicament and consequent self-concern - that underlies the theses of the Wittgensteinian position. The fundamentals of that position can be traced back to what Heerikhuizen refers to as the neo-romantic unease with the modern world and the seeking of '...refuge in the...egocentric dreams of happiness...(in)...a religion which held aloof from the world of action...which knew no form of worship but only solitary ecstasy...' (RMRH 33). The early Wittgenstein, on my account, fits the mould of Heerikhuizen's neo-romantic.

In the next chapter I shall turn to the significance of this finding.



## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND BEYOND

### 1. Conclusions Arising from Chapters 2-5

It is appropriate to begin this chapter by summarising what we can conclude from the discussion in Chapters 2-5.

In Chapter 5 we found that all the theses of the Wittgensteinian position can be understood as having their sitz im leben or context in life in what I have called the 'Weltbild of self-concern'. This is a late nineteenth century world-view, heavily influenced by a form of neo-romanticism which arose in response to what was then widely conceptualised as the self's predicament. Fundamental to the Weltbild of self-concern is the infatuation with the self's inner integrity and capacity to achieve an independence from all external contingencies. This latter aspiration for independence underlies each of the theses of the Wittgensteinian position. In short, the Wittgensteinian position is inextricably bound to a world-view involving a form of self-concern. Even though it is couched in terms of renunciation, the real nature of that renunciation is ultimately self-directed.

It is useful at this point to recall briefly the manner in which we found in Chapter 5 that each of the Wittgensteinian theses relate directly to a self-concerned independence from the world. The Weltbild of self-concern underlies the Perspective-thesis in the sense that this aims for a self-mastery that defies the experience of meaninglessness and suffering. It underlies the Absoluteness-thesis in that the latter implies that what has absolute value is something secured by the responses of a subject capable of generating its own integrity. In being able to do this despite all external constraints and without reference to personal consolation it also underlies the Anti-Consolation thesis. Independence of the world underlies the Unreflectiveness-thesis in that it is through an unreflective view of the whole that there is the capacity to remove the self's dependence on its desires coming to fruition.

It underlies the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis in that that implies a certain form of knowledge discontinuous with the unrestrained reliance on the satisfaction of the self's appetites and plans.

The idea of independence of the world underlies the Acceptance-thesis and the Anti-Justification thesis in that both presuppose a capacity, or at least an aspiration, to confront everything in life, including pain, the sense of powerlessness and the termination of the self. And to do so without reference to anything outside the self. That is, with no sense of contact with or inspiration from the sense of the existence of an independent metaphysical reality.

The idea of independence of the world also connects with the Passivity-Implication. For the state of such independence is associated with the sense of the self's passivity, ultimate unreality and even determination by the conceptual framework which constitutes language expounded in Chapter 1.

The above, therefore, summarises the fundamental relations between the Wittgensteinian position to the Weltbild of self-concern. We can next succinctly state the main conclusions derivable from Chapters 2-5 as a whole.

Succinctly stated, the main conclusions of Chapters 2-5 are as follows: (1) The Wittgensteinian position outlined in Chapter 1 derives from a form of neo-romanticism historically based in the nineteenth century. (2) This world-view is impregnated with a form of self-concern. (3) The case-studies of Chapter 2-4 provide us with distinct forms of self-renunciation which have no place for the kind of self-concern that is integral to the form of self-renunciation which has permeated into and lies at the core of the Wittgensteinian position.

The case-studies represent three motions of self-renunciation, involving distinct models of self-renouncing faith. The nature of self-renunciation in each of these is both

distinct from each other and also from the Wittgensteinian position. When philosophers such as Phillips (CP 70) and Dilman (PPL 86 & 128) claim they are illustrating the nature of Christianity in general, we have to regard their claims as highly questionable.

The grounds for claiming that the case-studies actually do represent distinct models of self-renunciation might be questioned. In anticipation of such questioning we need to briefly state the justifications for claiming that each is distinctive and also different from the Wittgensteinian position.

The following are the considerations, emanating from Chapter 2-4, which support the claim for this distinctiveness:

(1) There are some theses proposed as intrinsic to self-renouncing faith by the Wittgensteinian position which are not intrinsic in the case-studies. Although the case-studies, for reasons of space, did not consider each Wittgensteinian thesis in relation to each case-study, the following examples were highlighted in this connection. The Absoluteness-thesis, the Anti-Consolation, the Belief-Virtue/Doubt-Vice Equivalence thesis were noted as absent in Mauriac and Bernanos. The Unreflectiveness-thesis was considered in relation to Mauriac and found absent. The Perspective-thesis was examined in relation to Bernanos and White and found in neither. The Passivity-Implication was explored in relation to Bernanos and White and found to be absent in both. The Acceptance-thesis was explored in Bernanos and found not to be intrinsic to his conception of self-renunciation.

(2) Not merely are some of the theses of the Wittgensteinian position not found to be intrinsic to self-renunciation in some case-studies, some are held to be either not inherently self-renouncing or actually incompatible with the understanding of self-renunciation.

The Absoluteness-thesis is not inherently self-renouncing according to Mauriac's view. The pure disinterestedness envisaged by the Absoluteness-thesis is, for Mauriac,

impossible in the context in which self-renunciation takes place. For it is intrinsic to such renunciation that the self realise its total incapacity for such disinterestedness and, accordingly, places itself wholly at the mercy of God.

Bernanos implies that absoluteness is not inherently self-renouncing. The aspiration that one's faith be characterised by such total disinterestedness is, for Bernanos, incompatible with the humility and innocence associated with what is for him the paradigm of self-renouncing faith, namely, the spirit of childhood.

The Anti-Consolation thesis is, for Mauriac, not inherently self-renouncing. He holds that the craving for consolatory fulfilment is necessary for self-renouncing faith.

The Unreflectiveness-thesis is incompatible with genuine self-renunciation according to Mauriac's view. For unreflectiveness involves a refusal to acknowledge the self's weakness, its misery and its dependency on God.

The Perspective-thesis, was found not to be inherently self-renouncing in Bernanos and White. For Bernanos the spirit of childhood is incompatible with any desire to control the self's responses so as to purposely sever its dependence on the course of events in the world. Similarly, White exposes the egotism behind an aspiration to achieve a view of the whole of life that will free the self of the frustrations imposed upon it by the world.

(3) The logical structure of the model of self-renouncing faith in the case-studies is different from that of the Wittgensteinian position. The latter, as argued in Chapter 1, has the Absoluteness-thesis as the basis of its model of self-renouncing faith. In contrast, all three of the case-studies not only lack the Absoluteness-thesis but actually view it as incompatible with self-renouncing faith.

Other structural differences are to be found in the fact that the case-studies each have 'core' motifs which have no mention, sometimes no currency, in the Wittgensteinian model. In Bernanos there is the idea of the 'spirit of childhood'. In Mauriac there is the notion of

the need for the self to recognise its absolute dependency on God. White's model centres on the deliberate effort to cease the process of deliberate cultivation of the self.

(4) The White case-study differs from the Mauriac and Bernanos cases in incorporating the Acceptance-thesis and the Anti-Justification thesis. Its relation to the Unreflectiveness-thesis is complex but does incorporate some facets of unreflectiveness.

We can conclude, therefore, that the three case-studies contain conceptions of self-renouncing faith which are distinct from the Wittgensteinian position and also from each other.

The overall conclusions can be summarised again. The Wittgensteinian position derives from a form of neo-romanticism historically based in the nineteenth century. The form of self-renunciation associated with that is impregnated with a form of self-concern. The case-studies of Chapter 2-4 provide us with distinct forms of self-renunciation which have no place for such self-concern. Consequently, they yield very different models of self-renouncing faith.

## **2. Implications for the Wittgensteinian Position**

I now want to ask where the above conclusions leave the Wittgensteinian position. Is it irretrievably crippled or is it unaffected? I shall argue that the truth lies somewhere in between these extremes but yet raises serious considerations which deserve attention.

Let us begin by asking whether the above conclusions challenge the emphasis the Wittgensteinian position has put on the concept of self-renunciation in religious life? There is no basis for thinking this. I would wish to stress that self-renunciation is a key concept in providing a descriptive account of the sort of faith we find in Bernanos, in Mauriac and in White. And I think this must apply to all forms of religious belief which have any claim to lie within the Christian tradition. For it seems to me clear that in the abstract it is hard

to conceive of something being religious in a Christian sense unless it involved some element of self-curtailment and some variety of self-renunciation. In the Christian traditions religion seems necessarily to involve this. Where it does not apply, what we have is not religion but superstition. The latter is usefully understood as a matter of the self aspiring to secure ends solely to satisfy its own desires. (Though this definition may not to apply to all forms of magic in other, so called 'primitive' societies).

In this respect religion differs from morality. For it is imaginable that someone might couch morality in terms of not harming others, and of that non-harming involving no diminution of the self's claims. Now in the real world, of course, such a morality would be unsustainable. For we would soon find that not harming others all too often requires restraints to be placed on the self's own interests. However, the point is that such an abstract morality does at least seem imaginable, whereas the very idea of a religion as involving no self-abasement or humility or other diminution of the self's domain does not. (Again I emphasise that 'religion' here refers to the range of concepts which go under that term in the western world, a world whose sensibilities have Christian influences. As to whether this applies to what we term 'religion' in application to eastern practices is not something there is here space to discuss). Even Swinburne's somewhat crude definition of religion as a '...system which offers...salvation' does incorporate some minimal self-curtailment when he talks of a necessary requirement of it involving '...forgiveness from God and reconciliation to Him for having done what we believed morally wrong' (Faith and Reason, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, 128).

One clear implication of this study for the Wittgensteinian position is that its implicit assumption about the uniformity of self-renunciation is no longer tenable. Self-renunciation is a complicated concept. There are distinct varieties of it. A descriptive approach in philosophy must give heed to that variety.

A defender of the Wittgensteinian position might at this point concede that more should be done to recognise this variety. But, it might be insisted, all the Wittgensteinian position needs to do is to accommodate this variety and things can go on as before. I now wish to argue that this is not the case. The Wittgensteinian position is in need of a more radical overhaul than that.

The reason for saying this is that in the Wittgensteinian position the concept of self-renunciation is not just one religious concept alongside others. It is not something that stands on the same 'level' as, say, prayer or immortality. In the Wittgensteinian position the concept of self-renunciation has a much more fundamental place than these concepts. Self-renunciation is the concept that supposedly demarcates authentic from inauthentic religion. This has one fundamental consequence.

Self-renunciation becomes the concept that determines how all the others are to be understood. It determines the very character of the entire model of self-renouncing faith presupposed by the Wittgensteinian position. In other words, if we have to revise the concept of self-renunciation then we have to revise the entire 'structure' which the Wittgensteinian position conceives religious belief to be.

To amplify this I shall, in the next sections, say something about how this affects the view of metaphysics in relation to religion, the nature of reflectiveness and the associated issues of questionability, doubt and commitment. After that I shall look at the implications of questioning the Wittgensteinian position's concentration on belief and language in, and the exclusion of belief about, religious practice.

#### i. Self-Renouncing Faith and the Metaphysical

In section 9 of Chapter 1 (on the Anti-Justification thesis) we examined the Wittgensteinian position's exclusion of the metaphysical from self-renouncing faith. We saw that the

metaphysical is conceived of as something elsewhere, beneath, behind or beyond the world. The primary reason for the Wittgensteinian exclusion of the metaphysical from self-renouncing faith is the assumption that genuine self-renunciation requires the self to give up the urge for the most basic security. Dilman was highlighted as claiming:

...even a martyr going to his death is supported by the bond he feels unites him to God. He does not feel alone and abandoned...(His) action may be completely selfless...but it does not diminish his sense of self. It does not replace it with a void (SILAR 115).

For Dilman - in contrast to the case of the martyr - self- renunciation does involve the self embracing isolation and the sense of not being bonded to anything contingent. D.Z. Phillips was cited as claiming that that extended to accepting the 'radical pointlessness in things' (RST 82). But the urge to postulate metaphysical dimensions is said to involve a failure to attain such an acceptance: 'People moved by the imperfections of this world wish that things were different' (RWE 109).

I would hope that these assumptions about self-renunciation, derived from the Weltbild of self-concern, can be seen to be no longer tenable as applying to self-renunciation per se. They apply, at most, to only one understanding of it. (Recall, for example, the concept of the spirit of childhood as discussed in Chapter 3 - a form of renunciation in which the self actively strives for a sense of a point in things and which seeks out a sense of its bondedness to others).

The Wittgensteinian position's insistence on the necessarily anti-metaphysical character of self-renouncing faith is thus of questionable status. This is even clearer when we consider that the main vehicle for demonstrating the non-metaphysical character of religious belief by the Wittgensteinian position is what I have termed the Perspective-thesis. According to the Wittgensteinian position the very idea of the perspective sub specie



aeternitatis is directly applicable, without qualification, to religious belief. Religious belief is then, as we saw in Chapter 1, supposed to constitute looking

...at people and things in a way which includes the light and the dark...to see them with the whole of existence as their background; to see them sub specie aeternitatis (RST 126).

And this involves a particular type of detachment. We saw how Dilman borrowed the following passage from Eugene O'Neill to illustrate this detachment:

The ecstatic moment of freedom came...the joy of belonging to a fulfilment beyond men's lousy, pitiful, greedy fears and hopes and dreams...I lost myself...I was set free...I belonged, without past and future, within a peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life...(PPL 126).

Here is the radical immersion in the present which we saw in Chapter 5 characterised the Weltbild of self-concern with its underlying aspiration for an independence from the world.

There are much better foundations for maintaining more broadly Christian illustrations of an anti-metaphysical view of self-renouncing faith than those chosen by the Wittgensteinian position. Here I would point to the fact that the Patrick White case-study gives us both a view that is anti-metaphysical and also more religious than the idea of the perspective sub specie aeternitatis. It is more religious in that it is closer to some central Christian aversions to the kind of proud, detached self-concern associated with the Perspective-thesis. Of course, not all believers would be happy with White's non-metaphysical conception of Christianity. Moreover, it is no part of my purpose to advocate it as a theological position. What I do want to strongly urge is that it provides the basis for a better descriptive elucidation of what non-metaphysical versions of Christianity may be like than what has been presented by the Wittgensteinian position to date.

All this has implications for the assessment of Wittgenstein as a religious thinker. The claim that Wittgenstein is a thoroughly religious thinker, even when he is dealing with issues of language and meaning, has been made by a number of writers in recent years. These include Norman Malcolm (WRPV), Philip R. Shields (LSLW) and H.L. Finch (Wittgenstein, Rockport MA: Element, 1995, 132). What is unacceptable about these claims is the uncritical use of the term 'religious'. This is particularly true of Finch, who lumps Buddhism, other eastern religions, Sufism and Christianity together and claims Wittgenstein can be understood in relation to this sort of amalgam. Shields is more clear on the issue. For him, Wittgenstein is a religious thinker in that some key elements of his thought are permeated with Augustinianism. My own view is that Wittgenstein's thought can better be accommodated in relation to the Weltbild of self-concern. That, as I have argued, is importantly different from some key Christian traditions in that it is permeated with a form of self-concern that is alien to the many Christian traditions. When Cyril Barrett claims that Wittgenstein's idea of independence of the world is '...nothing more than what spiritual writers and mystics from both East and West have been saying for centuries' (Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 104), we should regard this as highly questionable in relation to Christianity. It fails to take into account the way independence of the world is tied to the particular milieu from which Wittgenstein came - something I have sought to explore in some detail in Chapter 5 and found to be permeated with self-concern. Thus, on my view, Wittgenstein is not a religious thinker in a Christian sense because of the absence in his life and thought of an unambiguously Christian notion of self-renunciation.

Let us now turn to look at the Wittgensteinian assumption that metaphysical elements in religion necessarily involve a hankering for security. This is a highly questionable assumption, as the following points suggest. Cumulatively, if not individually, they call for

a revision of the simplistic view that necessarily paints a 'metaphysical' religion as impure, self-orientated and inauthentic.

Sometimes the urge for the metaphysical arises out of compassion for others rather than security for oneself. We saw in Chapter 3 how the Priest of Ambricourt appreciates the misery of the poor in spirit and wants them to have a dream of splendour. He attacks the rich and privileged for their obsession with a metaphysical hope for an afterlife, because for them all this comes to is an unmitigated lust to retain their existing status. But for the really poor, for those entrenched in abject misery, his wish is for them to have some sustenance in the idea of a world beyond this one. A Wittgensteinian might here object and insist that what the Priest really wants is that the poor should come to see the glory of this world despite the misery that overwhelms them. However, this is really a distortion of the compassion that is at issue. The Priest's compassion is not for people capable of being brought to bear their misery. His compassion is for those whose despair is too great for there to be a realistic chance of that happening.

A further problem for the Wittgensteinian position's assumption that metaphysical conceptions are incompatible with self-renunciation is the fact that sometimes the incorporation of a metaphysical dimension serves to accentuate the degree of self-renunciation involved. This is not a point argued for in the preceding chapters. However, further justification for the claim is to be found in my paper 'D.Z. Phillips, Self-Renunciation and the Finality of Death'. That paper provides an example of one Ignatian conception in which recognition of the indelible permanence of the self is integral to appreciating the nothingness of Man before God. The point at issue is that the Wittgensteinian position, in its blanket exclusion of metaphysical conceptions, fails to appreciate ways in which some such conceptions can be integrally linked to self-renunciation. I appreciate that much could be done by way of providing further illustrations

of how this obtains. Needless to say, there is insufficient space to do that in this present study.

At this point an exponent of the Wittgensteinian position might claim that Wittgenstein's theory of meaning drives us to reject all metaphysical interpretations because it renders the idea of a metaphysical realm unintelligible. I next want to show how this line of argument is of much more limited scope than is generally assumed by exponents of the Wittgensteinian position.

Wittgenstein's view of meaning does not rule out all forms of metaphysical views within self-renouncing faith. It is true that Wittgenstein has been credited with some pretty far reaching 'metaphysics bashing'. Examples include the defusing of the idea of the Cartesian subject and the rejection of the possibility of the notion of a state of primordial certainty, a state unmediated by a subject's immersion in culture. I do not wish to challenge the legitimacy of this accreditation.

What does seem to me inappropriate is, firstly, the assumption that because some persistent metaphysical 'myths' are made suspect then all metaphysical conceptions should be taken as such. Secondly, the idea that the lack of complete intelligibility in some metaphysical conceptions should be a reason for rejecting them from the domain of self-renouncing faith.

This latter assumption ignores the possibility that the phenomenon of less than full literal transparency has a place to play in some forms of religious practice. It is important to distinguish between how words acquire meaning from the way words are subsequently used referentially in practices which, in various ways, are directed at what is taken within a practice as being literally there. What exists - what can intelligently be said to have existence - is often a consequence of the particular conceptualisation inherent in a practice or 'language-game'. In some practices, metaphysical entities are taken as in some ways

quasi-empirical for practice-dependent reasons. In the case of religious practice such practice-dependent reasons can involve a state of self-renunciation. Before going on to try to illustrate this it is important to recognise one further distinction.

The Wittgensteinian position appears to view metaphysical beliefs in religion as of one integrated type. Yet the metaphysical is much more varied and in this connection we can offer a distinction which, though it has no claims to being absolute and comprehensive, is useful. We can distinguish between (a) the metaphysical conceived of as an ordered whole into which the relationships and regularities of this world are grafted; (b) the metaphysical as a random incursion into the secure stability of this world. Now conception (a) is holistic. All the details and particularities of this world are somehow subsumed into a grand schema. This, of course, has implications of predictability and security which the Wittgensteinian position is wary of. But conception (b) does not necessarily have these implications at all.

An example will hopefully illustrate the above distinctions and make clear how metaphysical entities can be taken as in some ways quasi-empirical for practice-dependent reasons which serve to express one mode of self-renunciation.

Henry James' writings have recently received attention for the ethical and philosophical dimension they contain. It is my view that James' writings have much to say about the theme of renunciation [1]. In one of his works James gives us a case of renunciation in relation to the metaphysical. The young governess in The Turn of the Screw takes charge of two young orphaned children in a remote house and comes to believe that they are being lured into evil by the spirits of two dead servants of the same house.

An important literary-critical tradition rejects the metaphysical interpretation of this work and views it as a study of the governess' delusion [2]. However, this interpretation appears to be contrary to James' own purpose. It also overlooks the way in which a literal reading of the story gives expression to one form of the Jamesian theme of renunciation.

In the 1908 preface to the work (reproduced in ed. Robert Kimbrough, The Turn of the Screw: An Authoritative Text, Background and Sources, Essays in Criticism, New York: W.W. Norton, 1966, 117-123) James gives us an important insight into his view of things.

The essence of the matter was the villainy of motive in the evoked predatory creatures; so that the result would be ignoble - by which I mean trivial - were this element of evil but feebly or inanely suggested...

What, in the last analysis, had I to give the sense of? Of their being, the haunting pair, capable, as the phrase is, of everything - that is of exerting, in respect to the children, the very worst action small victims so conditioned might be conceived as subject to (122).

Thus James' purpose is to convey a certain 'villainy of motive', an acute sense of evil. It is important for the success of that purpose that a metaphysical dimension to the evil is suggested. This 'sense of horror' is missed on a psychological interpretation of the story. What needs to be conveyed is the reaction of one human being - the young governess - in the face of something terrible. Even a prominent proponent of the psychological interpretation of the work comes close to recognising it. Leon Edel writes:

Regardless of what any clinical diagnosis of the governess might be or any judgement of her credibility as a witness, there remains the sense of horror and the extent to which it is communicated to the reader (The Psychological Novel 1900-1950, New York: J.B. Lippincott & Co, 1955, 68).

In the face of this horror the young governess' stance is one of uncompromising virtue.

After coming to believe that the spirits are out to possess the children, the young governess does not desert them. Though in fear she decides to try to become the victim instead of them.

I had an absolute certainty that I should see again what I had already seen, but something within me said that by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, by accepting, by inviting, by surmounting it all, I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquillity of my companions...The children...I should thus fence off and absolutely save (TS 39).

And later:

I was to protect and defend the little creatures in the world the most bereaved and the most lovable.

I was a screen - I was to stand before them. The more I saw, the less they would (TS 42).

The renunciation in the above case is incomprehensible without reference to a literal belief in the metaphysical, paranormal reality of the ghosts on the part of the governess. James' story is a study in the consciousness of one who has renounced her own future in order to save the innocents. Years later, when setting out the events on paper, the female narrator writes that '...in going on with the record of what was hideous at Bly...I renew what I myself had suffered' (TS 57).

This case has an application to understanding some forms of religious belief involving the metaphysical. Firstly, such belief need not be about any wholesale metaphysical order - in this case we have transitory incursions into the present. Secondly, the belief in the incursion of metaphysical realities need not involve any precise specification of, or clarity about, the exact mechanics of the nature of the intervention. The governess has no theory about how it is possible that such entities as ghosts could exist. Nor is she in possession of any refined view of the precise nature of the evil confronting the children. James does not think it necessary or purposeful to try to explain just what this evil is: He says, 'There is for such a case no eligible absolute of the wrong' (in ed. Robert

Kimbrough, The Turn of the Screw: An Authoritative Text, Background and Sources, Essays in Criticism, New York: W.W. Norton, 1966, 122). The particular reader has to refine further this sense of horror for himself. In the particular context in which James wrote there was a living tradition in which he might be helped. As Peter G. Beidler has shown in Ghosts, Demons and Henry James (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989) James was writing to an audience informed by populist treatments of studies into purported supernatural phenomena. None of this should lead us to insist that James himself believed in the literal reality of ghosts as visitors from another realm. Yet it should confirm to us that James saw that such literalness was required to appreciate some forms of evil and to enable us to appreciate some forms of renunciation in confrontation with them. The phenomenon of less than full literal transparency is not a problem within a practice in which threatening ghosts are deemed to exist. There is sufficient cultural agreement on how to interpret certain types of phenomena and evidences that a fully watertight specification of just what the nature of the metaphysical realm is is not an issue. This agreement means that, as suggested earlier, words can be used referentially in that they are directed at what is taken within a practice as being literally there without having to satisfy the rigorous standards of empirical science.

This latter point is important as a potential defence against the application to this context of the type of criticism made by David Cockburn. In his fine paper 'The Supernatural' (Religious Studies 28, 1992, 296), Cockburn says that the idea of a 'realm of being' may '...involve the empiricist idea that a realm of which we speak is only truly independent of us if the language in which we speak of it can be thought of as being, in the end, dictated by the nature of that realm'. But in the example from James there is no place for a rigorous tracing of what 'in the end' is this realm from which the visitations come. It suffices that there is some sense of an intrusive and threatening influence, vague yet



conceived as literal.

A Wittgensteinian retort to this might be that we cannot separate the truth of a belief from the attitude towards the world which goes with it. However, this objection has less force in the above case than might be assumed. For use of the term 'truth' misleadingly encourages us to conceive of the matter in terms of an extra-linguistic correspondence with reality. Whereas in fact what we should focus on is the sense that within the terms of the example - and the sorts of practice in which it occurs in real life situations - a degree of literal ascription is present. Such focus will enable us to see that there is no religious confusion here.

The choice of the Jamesian example is deliberate, even though a critic might advocate that a case more closely integrated with religious belief would have been more appropriate. But the actual case chosen seems to me relevant. D.Z. Phillips, for one, is particularly keen to sever all connections between authentic religious virtue and the para-normal. Yet I wish to urge that even metaphysical conceptions involving the para-normal can have renunciatory dimensions which can relate to those found in self-renunciatory religion.

To conclude this section we can say that the Wittgensteinian position's view that authentic faith must be anti-metaphysical is open to serious question.

## ii. Self-Renunciation, Unreflectiveness, Unquestionability and the Passivity of Conceptual Subsumption

We can now consider the implications of the criticism in this essay for the Wittgensteinian position with respect to the claim of unreflectiveness, unquestionability and passivity of the self. Where does it leave the Wittgensteinian position?

Recalling the discussion in Chapter 1, the Wittgensteinian position presents religious belief as a straightforward conceptual orientation to the world. As such, it is something necessarily characterised by an unreflective immediacy. Such unreflectiveness guarantees the absence of the intrusive influence of the self, as we found in Winch's discussion of Tolstoy's Father Sergius. Reflectiveness lets in the self. It is an avenue for the self to weigh religious belief alongside other means to secure for the self advantage and satisfaction. In Chapter 1 we also saw how D.Z Phillips' treatment of prayers of confession yields the same stress on unreflectiveness. Faulkner's fictional character, Temple Stevens, puts her confession in articulate form - in so doing she is able to work out her own salvation. But, says Phillips, in authentic religion prayers of confession arise precisely in situations where the self accepts there is no prospect of it gaining salvation by its own powers of articulation and reflection. In Chapter 1 we also saw how this view of religious belief as an unreflective conceptual orientation to the world is reinforced by the idea of religious belief as regulation by a picture. Once taken literally then that picture becomes either uncertain and ineffective or - in the case of the picture of surviving death, for example - a consolation.

In Chapter 1 I used the phrase 'conceptual subsumption' to denote the nature of the passivity implied of the self by the Wittgensteinian position. The self is subsumed into a conceptual structure, a way of categorising and responding to the world. The reality of the self seems to slip out. In the words of Winch, quoted in Chapter 1, '...the agent is this perspective' (EA 178).

It is my view that we can no longer accept that self-renouncing religious belief (as found in diverse traditions in western Christendom) is necessarily a straightforward conceptual orientation to the world. To begin with, it is far from clear whether attitudes and perspectives are as disconnected from articulation and reflectiveness as the Wittgensteinian position supposes. Are we here right to think of two sets of phenomena rigidly distinct from

each other, as it implies ? I would tentatively suggest that there is more scope for a degree of overlap here than is supposed. That aside, let us look deeper into the issue of what is means to portray religious belief as a conceptual orientation to the world.

It is the Wittgensteinian position's understanding of self-renunciation that promotes in that position an oversimple view of the way the religious believer is related to the world. Such a relation is supposed to consist of the self's uniform conceptual subsumption involving unreflectiveness. In some respects it is helpful to see this as a weaker form of such unreflectiveness that Jane Howarth presents in her phenomenological account of human relation to the natural world (see 'The Crisis of Ecology', Environmental Values 4, 1995). In opposition to what she calls modernism, a view of the isolated subject distinct from the value-free universe of discrete interacting objects linked by a chain of causality, she highlights and expounds Heidegger's phenomenological treatment of 'dwelling'. This approach seeks to unearth the pre-theoretical notion of 'dwelling' as a way of being-in-the-world prior to distinguishing between being and the world (24). This example differs from the Wittgensteinian position in that it assumes that there is a 'fundamental relatedness to the world' (24). The Wittgensteinian approach would reject the notion of such a fundamental relatedness, rightly in my view, and would view relatedness as derivative of particular conceptual categorisations of the world.

Yet the Wittgensteinian position is in some ways only one step removed from this phenomenological assumption. Stephen Mulhall says '...conceptual structures determine the 'essence' of reality rather than reflecting its pre-existing nature' (On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects, London: Routledge, 1990, 155). D.Z. Phillips applies this type of Wittgensteinian viewpoint in an unqualified way to religion when he talks of the atheist and the believer seeing different worlds (FPE 132).

This latter case is an example of the Wittgensteinian position conflating religious belief into a simple, uniformly straightforward relation between the self and the world. But does it do justice to the variety of stances that characterise the believer's position in his or her living of the religious life?

I suggest it does not. Religious life at the level of the individual is not one single type of orientation to the world. It is not always and invariably something determined by a set of regulating conceptual structures. Firstly, there is a place within religious life for forms of doubts which are not best described, in the terms of Winch's Father Sergius example discussed in Chapter 1, as a matter of the intrusive assertion of the self. Doubt, we saw in Chapter 3, is quite compatible with the Bernanosian concept of self-renunciation centred on the idea of 'the spirit of childhood'. Secondly, there is a place within religious life for the concept of commitment.

In support of the latter point one example of a form of commitment encountered in religious life is found in the Ignatian tradition of retreats centred on St Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. I have discussed one such conception in some detail elsewhere (see SRFD). The purpose of such retreats is often to rekindle the believer's attachment to the claims of the religious life, to make those claims real and tangible in the believer's own life. Individuals go on such retreats in order to immerse their entire consciousness in meditation on the religious pictures presented in the Spiritual Exercises. This includes meditating on the world prior to the very existence of the self and also on various crucial points in the life of Christ, such as Gethsemane and the Crucifixion.

The point to note is that even if the individual is here trying to immerse his or her 'consciousness' in the picture, such that it regulates fully in their life, this is something intentional. It is not a matter of a passively orientating conceptual scheme.

In Chapter 1 it was claimed that the Wittgensteinian position was suspicious of intention on the basis that this encouraged the sense of the self as being able to command its responses by an act of will. But this is really an unwarranted suspicion. What we have in the Ignatian example is really a case of what we might call 'indirect intention'. The self does not directly intend that it will acquire the authentically self-renouncing stance. Rather it places itself in the right circumstances for the attainment of such a stance. (To anyone insisting that intention must be something direct then we might say that the stance attained is 'unintended but not unforeseen').

There is no place for the implication of unquestionability which goes with the Unreflectiveness-thesis. It is in this context of purposive self-transformation that the concept of religious commitment can be seen to have a clear role. To be committed here (though not necessarily elsewhere) is to actively seek to be subsumed by (or by some part of) the Catholic framework. But such a seeking takes place within a life where the realities of that framework are less than living for the particular individual concerned.

This type of case also enables us to see that even when conceptual subsumption is achieved (through the practices of the retreat or whatever) then that is only part of religious belief. Self-renouncing faith is far broader than the space that can be allowed for it by modelling it as a form of conceptual subsumption. It incorporates much else besides, including doubt, uncertainty and confusion. It is therefore an oversimplification to claim that religious belief has constancy and stability of the same order as those which characterise the fundamental beliefs Wittgenstein seeks to elucidate in On Certainty. In this connection Phillips (RWE 151-181) and Malcolm ('The Groundlessness of Belief' in ed. S.C. Brown, Reason and Religion, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1977) are simply wrong (if they are generalising about religious belief).

It is important to be clear that some parts of the Wittgensteinian position can survive the above criticism. One facet that survives is the idea that religious belief involves (as opposed to saying it constitutes) primitive reactions. It seems to me that this idea is distinct from the idea that religious belief is a conceptual orientation to the world. Primitive reactions are somehow rooted in the psychology of the self in a way that is different from being construed as part of its conceptual framework. Primitive reactions are just ways in which we do react; reference to the idea of a conceptual framework does not have an application in explaining why we react thus. Some religious rites are grafted onto primitive reactions, or are in some way a ritualised extension of such reactions. (For example, there might be scope for portraying rites such as baptism and ordination, or the practice of kneeling at prayer, in this way). But primitive reactions seen in this way are only a very small part of religious life.

The claim that religious belief can involve a conceptual orientation to the world is not unacceptable. What I have taken issue with above is the unqualified assumption that this is all that self-renouncing faith is, through and through. As I have argued, not all aspects of religious belief can necessarily be taken in this way.

The idea that religious belief can involve some degree of regulation by religious pictures can also be accepted, but only if we are willing to recognise that such regulation is not the only force in a believer's life. Regulation by a picture can be compelling. But few pictures really are credible as being able to sustain everything that a believer has to confront in his or her living of the Christian life. Consider Wittgenstein's picture of the Last Judgement. That might motivate the believer in the sense of instilling some degree of awe into his assessment of the seriousness of the things he comes across in his day to day life. However, it is far from clear that it can serve as a focus for all his or her adherence to a faith that is self-renouncing. For self-renunciation also involves the kind of commitment

referred to earlier; that is something other than subjection of the self out of awe. It is tenacity of purpose that survives those periods when awe is reduced to dryness of spirit.

It might be objected by a Wittgensteinian that all beliefs involve some sort of conceptual orientation to the world and that my criticism could be attacked on that basis as being un-Wittgensteinian. In reply, I would urge that the point at issue is whether self-renouncing faith is (a) solely and (b) a single, conceptual orientation to the world. Certainly various beliefs involve conceptualisations. But a whole range of such conceptualisations are present in a believer's way of interacting with the world. The weakness in the Wittgensteinian position is that it wrongly assumes that religious belief can only be self-renouncing if it is a thorough-going, single, harmonious conceptual orientation. My point is that religious belief can be self-renouncing without it being seen in this way at all. Reflectiveness, commitment, active attempts to become conceptually subsumed, doubt - all these things and more can be accommodated within self-renouncing faith. The way they are accommodated depends on understanding particular models of such faith.

A defender of the Wittgensteinian position might try to argue that the interpretation of the Unreflectiveness-thesis and Passivity-Implication given in Chapter 1 is invalid. D.Z Phillips has realised that the Wittgensteinian position is open to the charge of ending up with a 'mechanistic view of human action' and of leading to a 'view of human beings as automata' (WAR 193 ff.) and is anxious to combat such a charge. In so doing he attacks the views of John Canfield, a philosopher whose writings were quoted in Chapter 1 as exemplifying the Unreflectiveness-thesis.

If Phillips succeeds in his criticism of Canfield, does this not constitute a serious problem for the way I construed the Unreflectiveness-thesis? It is my view that Phillips does unearth one problem with Canfield's position, a problem which constitutes a departure from Wittgenstein's own position. However, that aspect of Canfield's view given in Chapter 1

as illustrative of the Unreflectiveness-thesis is unaffected by Phillips' criticism. Phillips, therefore, has provided no serious refutation of the kind of exposition of the Unreflectiveness-thesis I have given. Let us clarify in a little more detail the issues at stake.

Phillips criticises the way Canfield assimilates the idea of 'just doing' in Wittgenstein to that of Zen Buddhism. Canfield illustrates a Zen ideal of absence of self with the story of a boatman who is hit by an empty boat but proceeds with unconcern. Later, when he crashes into another boat carrying people, he curses and shouts. Canfield quotes the Zen story:

Earlier he faced emptiness, now he faces occupancy. If a man should succeed in making empty, and in that way wonder through the world, then who would do him harm (WAZ 407).

As claimed in Chapter 1, this idea of 'just doing' is a matter of an absence of articulation or emotion which are avenues for the self to enter into the arena. As such, it seems to me to be in line with a more general theme in the Wittgensteinian position which I have termed the Unreflectiveness-thesis. (As the example from Phillips in Chapter 1 shows, it is a theme found in Phillips' own work).

But Phillips is right to point out that Canfield has, at some points, conflated this form of 'just doing' with the Zen idea of the absence of mentalistic thinking, and that this is an unwarranted conflation. To make this clearer let us consider Phillips' own example of a Christian belief, the belief that one should take no heed for the morrow. Taking no heed for the morrow here, says Phillips rightly, is a matter of the character of the kind of life a person leads. It is not a claim that the person in question lacks or has dispensed with the mentalistic concept 'thinking'.

Though Phillips' point is quite valid it does not have any implications for the kind of interpretation of the Unreflectiveness-thesis I have been employing throughout this thesis.



The Unreflectiveness-thesis as I have expounded it is not to be conflated with the idea that what the Wittgensteinian position is advocating is an absence of thinking, in the way that the Zen ideal of 'just doing' involves that. The point I have stressed about the Unreflectiveness-thesis is that it involves not an absence of thinking but an absence of reflective articulation as a fulcrum around which the self's interests can revolve. Thinking is not incompatible with something being unreflective in this sense. The Unreflectiveness-thesis can accommodate thinking because thinking is supposedly moulded by the conceptual framework in which the subject is found. [3]

What the above defence comes to is this. The Wittgensteinian position is still open to the charge of having a mechanistic account of human action and a view of human beings as automata - what I have termed the Passivity-Implication.

The Passivity-Implication highlights the following significant defect in the Wittgensteinian position. It fails to do justice to religious conceptions of self-valuation. Yet self-valuation is often a genuinely religious phenomenon. We can here recall the words of the Bernanos' Priest of Ambricourt after he has finally come to appreciate his own self-worth: '(I)f pride could die in us, the supreme grace would be to love oneself in all simplicity' (J 251). For Bernanos, such self-love is a pre-requisite to solidarity with others (see the section on the Passivity-Implication in Chapter 3). Another form of self-valuation is found in the Ignatian view mentioned above. This self-valuation is found conjoined with a particular sense of the self's nothingness.

The dominion of God is immortal like myself; it begins with time and continues through eternity; death, which deprives men of all their rights, is unable to do anything against the rights of God (The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, London: Burns & Oates, 1881, 26).

Any attempt to raise questions about such issues as the intelligibility of disembodied existence is likely to miss the significant sense of the contrast between God's dominion and the self's value that is here at issue. The nothingness of selfhood is here seen in the indestructible permanence of the self. And this gives rise to a sense of a special worth appertaining to the self. There is no escaping the self that one is. Not even death can free one from being what one was created to be by God in preference to '...an infinite number of creatures who were equally possible to Him, and who will forever remain in nothingness' (24). Thus, there are genuine reasons for doubting whether the Passivity-implication can do justice to the sense of the reality of the self and the self-value, the reverential attitude towards self, that pertains to some religious conceptions.

To summarise the above we can say that religious belief is much more complex a phenomenon than the type of uniform conceptual subsumption implied by the Wittgensteinian position. The latter fails to do justice to many religious conceptions involving commitment, the reality of the self, and of self-valuation. The ideas of an unreflective conceptual subsumption, of adherence to a 'picture' and of primitive reactions, are able to account only for a much narrower band of genuinely religious phenomena than the Wittgensteinian position appreciates.

### iii. The Wittgensteinian 'Belief-In/Belief-About Distinction'

A further implication of the criticism contained in this essay as a whole is that the Wittgensteinian position's rigid distinction between belief in and belief about the religious life is untenable. This distinction is effectively a consequence of the Unreflectiveness-thesis and its emphasis on what happens in religious practice rather than talk or belief about such practice. Belief in demarcates all those beliefs, language uses and practices that go on in religious life; belief that relates to all forms of reflective clarification and assessment of

such belief in. Let us start by recalling and elaborating on examples provided in Chapter 1.

In The Concept of Prayer Phillips distinguishes between an account a believer may give about her beliefs and a philosophical account of such beliefs. When praying '...the believer knows what he is doing...But when he is asked to give an account of prayer...he no longer knows his way about...One is asking...for...an indication of the meaning of prayer (to give) to someone for whom prayer means very little, and often, he fails to provide an adequate one' (CP 2). Phillips says that the concept 'God' has its meaning in the role it plays in the life of believers (FPE 19). A descriptive account must be directed to understanding that role and not to what he calls 'philosophical reflection upon the reality of God'. Utterances which belong to the latter are pseudo-epistemological theories initiated in an attempt to give religion respectability in other spheres of life.

Recourse to 'role in life' does not require compatibility with what believers themselves believe about their beliefs. This is something also made particularly clear by Michael Coughlan, who offers a criterion for assessing a descriptive account . The criterion is :

how well (the account) can accommodate the various features which are exhibited by that aspect of life in which the concepts function, e.g. the life of prayer...What is important is which view best accords with religious practice, with how belief in God operates in the life of the believer, not with how well it compares with the believer's 'conceptual speculation' (WPRB 236).

In short the criterion is that of accommodating the various features of and according with the religious practice.

The problem with this criterion is that it is hard to see how it can be applied if it must be taken to exclude all belief about religious practice by participants of that practice. A good illustration of this is to be found in Peter Winch's The Idea of a Social Science.

Winch says '...the test of whether a man's actions are the application of a rule is not whether he can formulate it but whether it makes sense to distinguish between a right and a wrong way of doing things...' (ISS 58). This seems to be in line with the above criterion in that a descriptive account should heed the norms that exist in a society rather than the explicit self-understanding of members of that society. However, a central tenet of the book is the claim that social relations exist in and through ideas. It is true that Winch allows for the existence of non-discursive ideas (ISS 128), but the two examples he gives of non-discursive activity - namely 'war' (used in a further connection in (ISS 130-1)) and the glance of understanding displayed by two characters in the film Shane - imply a capacity by the subject to be explicitly in possession of some sort of understanding of what he or she is involved in and to have beliefs about that. This suggests that any strict dichotomy between belief in and belief about the practices and concepts occurring in social or religious life is untenable.

There is a further consideration which I suggest is overwhelmingly potent in demanding our rejection of the unqualified belief in/ belief about distinction. This is the fact that within religious life there are sometimes conceptions where belief in requires belief about. That is, to be genuinely engaged in the practice of religious belief is seen as requiring certain beliefs about the character of one's attachment to the practice and a clear self-understanding. One example is the distinction made by St John of the Cross in his The Ascent of Mount Carmel:

...many spiritual persons indulge in recreations of sense under the pretext of offering prayer...to God; and they do this in a way that must be called recreation rather than prayer, and which gives more pleasure to themselves than to God (Book 3, Chapter 24, in trans. & ed. E. Allinson Peers, The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross, London: Burns & Oates, 1935).

This notion of an approach that is more than a matter of a 'recreation of sense' is one that derives from belief about religious practice. Yet as far as I can see it is a religious distinction. Indeed it has claims to be one by Wittgensteinian criteria, namely by virtue of its self-renouncing character and its anti-consolatory stance. According to St John, reflection about religious belief and practice both transforms, extends and helps determine the nature of belief in religious life. Such reflection needs to be explicit and to be centred around articulating one's attachment. It is not at all like Dilman's idea, outlined as part of the discussion of the Unreflectiveness-thesis in Chapter 1, of an unarticulated evaluation of one's values. Dilman was cited as claiming that a person '...can be thoughtful and critical (without being)...a thinker. His thoughtfulness...is manifest in his life and actions...(A)lthough he is not a thinker...yet he may be receptive, open and even vulnerable to the way life tests and tries his values' (FATM 135-6). To apply this to religion can lead to a distortion of some conceptions of the religious life where reflective self-examination and explicit articulation of one's values are demanded as a prelude to an ever intensifying process of perfecting one's attachments.

Does the Wittgensteinian position really need to draw the distinction between belief in and belief about in the sharp way that it does in order to provide a descriptive account? There is little reason to think so. It is appropriate to refer to what Allen Janik says about the need for a descriptive approach to incorporate reflective experience as found within the practice under investigation. In a paper entitled 'Self-Deception, Naturalism and Certainty: Prolegomena to a Critical Hermeneutics' (Inquiry 31, 1988) Janik says:

Describing (the) world-picture is...getting straight about the 'grammar' or 'logic' which makes our practices coherent...It is a matter of learning to determine the meaning of expressions by looking at the way we use them. It does not depend upon taking agents' self-descriptions as the last word; for the point of words is to get a

job done, not to inform others of exactly what we believe ...(T)he language in which we are instructed is not intended as a vehicle for understanding the character of the practice but for initiation into it...' (298-9).

Janik goes on to say that in order to articulate the structure of a practice we need the '...the sort of reflective experience typical of coaches...' which we find in sport.

The coach is a person with an experienced third-person perspective on a practice, which is to say that the coach both knows how to play the sport in question and how to convey a sense of the finer points of the game to players. To know the game...is to know what a competent coach knows; for that knowledge is definitive with respect to the practice (299).

This understanding of Wittgensteinian descriptivism has a clear place for some forms of belief about.

The form of Wittgensteinian descriptivism advocated by Janik is an advance over that implied by the Wittgensteinian position as elucidated in previous paragraphs and in Chapter 1. The idea of 'coaches' in the spiritual life ties in well with the role of the Catholic writer, a role which Mauriac and Bernanos saw themselves as trying to fulfil. The role of the 'spiritual director' in Catholic traditions also fits in here. Even Protestant traditions which place a great emphasis on the individual discerning the will of God do have a place for spiritual writers. (The 'Journal' of George Fox is one example. Another is the place given to preachers; their role is often to promote a transforming reflection on religious life and their sermons can end up in printed and published form).

Despite these positive aspects in Janik's elucidation of descriptivism, it too could conceivably exclude some forms of genuinely religious beliefs about. For example, he says...(T)he language in which we are instructed is not intended as a vehicle for understanding the character of the practice but for initiation into it...'. Now this implies that

the only acceptable beliefs about in religion are those that emanate from those that have a claim to be 'coaches' of one sort or another. The beliefs about deriving from theologians of doctrine would appear to be excluded out of hand. Certainly, many theologically inspired beliefs about are vested in political expediencies. But descriptivism should not assume at the outset that this is always the case. Even when it is, care should be taken to investigate the nature of the expediency concerned. The incompatibility of expediency with selflessness should not be assumed at the outset. Here it is useful to recall Stuart Hampshire's point about rulers in the Vatican having a conception of the good which requires that they do not '...see in the Church's problems an occasion for vindicating some ideal of personal integrity, or for observing the principles of humility and innocence...' Innocence and Experience (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989, 174).

Space does not here permit a fuller examination of the issues, but there is likely to be more traffic between theological beliefs about and the beliefs about which are handled by spiritual coaches than Janik's account can allow for.

Now that we are clearer about the dispensability of a rigid belief in /belief about distinction, it is worth noting where it comes from. The idea that authentic religion has to do with what goes on in religious life and practice is one consequence of the Weltbild of self-concern's obsession with the instantaneous moment - what Wittgenstein calls 'living in the present'. But not all conceptions of the religious life give as much weight to the present. Some see not an instantaneous present but a progression. This idea of a process or progression is well illustrated in Thomas Merton's account of self-renunciation in his essay 'Pure Intention' (in No Man is an Island, London: Burns & Oates, 1955). Pure intention is distinguished from impure intention. The latter '...yields to the will of God while retaining a preference for (one's) own will'. Merton stresses that there are different degrees of pure intention. There is what he calls 'right intention'. Right intention does seek to do the will

of God but '...in doing so we still consider the work and ourselves apart from God and outside Him' (62). We may do a very good job but '...in doing so we will become involved in the hope of results that will satisfy ourselves'. Right intention reaches out into many plans for work done for God, plans which stand ahead of us like milestones.

And God is always there at the end...is always 'future'...The spiritual life of a man of right intention is always more or less provisional...more possible than actual, for he always lives as if he had to finish just one more job before he could relax and look for a little contemplation (63-4).

Contrasting with right intention is 'simple intention'. Simple intention '...seeks and desires nothing but the supreme poverty of having nothing but God' (64). Now a man of right intention can realize that to have God and nothing else is riches enough but, says Merton, '...between the thought of such poverty and its actualization in our lives lies the desert of emptiness through which we must travel in order to find Him' (65). Again, the point to stress here is that a failure to give due attention to beliefs about the religious life will lead to an over-narrow view of descriptivism.

The Wittgensteinian position is sometimes accused of being prescriptive and not living up to its descriptivist claims. The above discussion shows one sense in which this charge is justified. It is justified in the sense that the Wittgensteinian position is imbued with its own set of parameters as to what authentic religion is like and it is unable to register as genuine any phenomenon that falls outside those parameters. But, I hope I have shown, those parameters are in reality arbitrary and do not belong in a descriptive account.

A critic might view my attempts to extend the boundaries of Wittgensteinian descriptivism as tending to undermine its claim to being philosophy and reducing it to a species of piecemeal empirical investigations. Briefly in reply, philosophy requires a clear understanding of the variety of uses of words and of users of forms of words and of the



difference between one practice and another. But the end is not a fascination with particularities as such (as, for example, the scholar of ancient near eastern languages is fascinated by the subtle changes between languages, or the anatomical entomologist is fascinated by the variety of insect structure). It is how such particularities impinge upon our wider thinking. Sometimes such clarity can change the way we look at the world, can wrestle us free from preconceptions and complexities that have been taken as simple truths. To that extent, a descriptive method in philosophy can, for example, incite in us a self-scrutiny conducive to helping us to free ourselves from at least some varieties of self-deception. This, in turn, links with more ancient conceptions of philosophy which view its practice as integral to appreciating our place in the world. One example of the transformation that such a descriptive approach gives rise to is the form of detachment from self-orientation found in J. Neville Ward's The Use of Praying (London: Epworth Press, 1967), a devotional work inspired by D.Z. Phillips' account of prayer. (The transformative effect of understanding is an example of what the continental philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer says about the way meaning speaks to the interpreter in his or her own situation (Truth and Method, New York: Seabury Press, 1975, 263 ff.)).

A critic might affirm that the earlier criticism of the Wittgensteinian position's method of descriptivism for being based on the belief in /belief about distinction gives no clear way forward. For, it might be said, I have suggested no clear criteria by which a descriptive approach should be practised.

Two points can be made in reply. Firstly, gaining an understanding seems to me to be something that is not amenable to any precise method specifiable in advance. In the case of religion, it is something that comes through living with religious people, through reading accounts of the spiritual life and through a certain sensitivity in the observer to the pains and frustrations of the human condition. Secondly, there is at least one fruitful general

direction into an understanding. This is through identifying concepts which are fundamental to governing the character of a whole host of other concepts within the religious or other tradition being investigated.

In connection with this latter point we should again call to mind how fundamental the concept of self-renunciation in Christianity is. It is not fundamental through being established by concentration on belief in the religious life; it cuts across the belief in/belief that 'divide'. Yet the different forms of self-renunciation give rise to different traditions of living a religious life. Other concepts, especially that of 'God' are sometimes affirmed as the most elemental in getting an understanding of Christianity. I would urge that the concept of self-renunciation is fundamental in that it determines the nature of what can count as the self's religiously authentic relation to God. As such, it determines one's understanding of the concept 'God' itself.

Despite my criticisms of the Wittgensteinian position's oversimple account of self-renunciation, it is appropriate to applaud its isolation of so fundamental a concept. That is an important contribution to the recognition of the character of religious faith as exemplified in Christianity. It is a contribution that needs to be recognised by many contemporary philosophers of religion who deal exclusively with theologically-inspired assumptions about the concept of God almost surgically isolated from the dimensions of self-renunciation which are integrally conjoined to it in the daily context of religious life.

## NOTES

### Chapter 1

[1] The dispute here centres on whether such an account is forthcoming. In past times philosophers such as Hume, F.H. Bradley, J. McTaggart and J.S. Mill have questioned this. In modern times J.L. Mackie's important paper 'Evil and Omnipotence' (first published in Mind 64, 1955) follows this tradition. An important recent example is that of William Rowe in his 'The Empirical Argument from Evil' in eds. R. Audi and W. Wainwright, Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986. Philosophers who have thought such an account is forthcoming include Leibnitz (in his Theodicy), Nelson Pike in his 'Hume on Evil', Philosophical Review 72, 1963, and Alvin Plantinga. Relevant works by the latter are: 'The Free Will Defence', reproduced in ed. Basil Mitchell, The Philosophy of Religion, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, The Nature of Necessity, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, and God, Freedom and Evil, New York: Harper & Rowe, 1974. A useful clarificatory paper that suggests how Christianity may be incompatible with pointless evil is Terence Penelhum's 'Divine Goodness and the Problem of Evil', Religious Studies 2, 1966.

[2] Another philosopher who has recently drawn attention to the internal understanding of suffering that is found in the Christian tradition is Marilyn McCord Adams. See her papers 'Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 63, 1989, and 'Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Approach to the Problem of Evil' in Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment, eds. R. Audi and W. Wainwright, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1986.

### Chapter 2

[1] What I call the inter-individual model consists of the broad range of views which assume that self-deception is to be approached in terms of a form of deceit akin to that between individuals. On this model a subject S believes (or knows) p and also believes (or knows) not-p. A major problem then emerges as to how an agent can actually believe p and believe not-p and, consequently, how self-deception is possible at all.

### Chapter 3

[1] Such a Rousseau-like conception of innocence is to be found in Elizabeth Wolgast, 'Innocence', Philosophy 68, 1993. See my criticism of this in my paper 'Wolgast on Innocence', Philosophy 69, 1994.

### Chapter 5

[1] Some further backing for the appropriateness of reference to Emerson is the fact that the Wittgensteinian Stanley Cavell has recently recognised some broad connections between Emerson and Wittgensteinian interests. See, for example This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures After Emerson After Wittgenstein, Albuquerque: Living Batch Press, 1989; 'Thinking of Emerson' in his The Senses of Walden, San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981; Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. It should be noted that my view of the connections to Emerson emphasises different facets from those explored in Cavell.

[2] The idea that the root of understanding is not a hypothesis but the deed is, of course,

expanded to involve not just the religious relationship to the world but the entire human conceptual comprehension of the world in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The appropriate slogan here is 'Im Anfang war die Tat' (In the beginning was the deed) - the quotation from Goethe given in (OC # 402).

[3] There are, of course, roots in ancient philosophy for the emphasis on the present. Epicureanism and Stoicism offered a therapy against anguish (just as the Weltbild of self-concern was a reaction to certain forms of despair brought in being by the world view of the time) and often resorted to stressing acceptance of the present and detaching oneself from all thought of the future. A good account is to be found in Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life, trans. & introd. by Arnold I. Davidson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

## Chapter 6

[1] Examples include Merle A. Williams, Henry James and the Philosophical Novel, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Edwin Sill Fussell, The Catholic Side of Henry James, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Paul Seebright, 'The Pursuit of Unhappiness: Paradoxical Motivation and the Pursuit of Unhappiness in Henry James' "Portrait of a Lady"', Ethics 98, 1988; several essays in Martha Nussbaum's Love's Knowledge, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. There is a good study of renunciation in James' The Wings of the Dove to be found in Edith Wyschogrod, Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning in Moral Philosophy, Chicago & London: University of Chicago University Press, 1990, 42-49. Further aspects of the theme of renunciation in James' works are dealt with in Caron Kaston, Imagination and Desire in the Novels of Henry James, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984.

[2] See, for example: Edmund Wilson 'The Ambiguity of Henry James' in ed. W. Gerald, A Casebook on Henry James' "The Turn of the Screw", New York: Crowell, 1969; Leon Edel, Henry James: The Untried Years 1843-1870, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953.

[3] Another example of mistaking the Unreflectiveness-thesis for a claim about the absence of thinking is to found at some points in Henry Le Roy Finch's interpretation of Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein, Rochport MA & Shaftsbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1995, 138). The kind of renunciation of self he ascribes to Wittgenstein is one of identitylessness. This is a matter, he claims, of 'dropping the private self entirely together with the inner world and mental objects and mental processes' and 'abandoning the "thinking self"'. . .

## ABBREVIATIONS

The number in brackets after each entry refers to the section number in the bibliography where full bibliographic details can be obtained.

AE

Holland, R.F., Against Empiricism (1).

AEMIP

Holland, R.F., 'Absolute Ethics, Mathematics and the Impossibility of Politics' (1).

ARG

Sutherland, Stewart, Atheism and the Rejection of God (1).

BH

Hebblethwaite, Peter, Bernanos (3).

BL

Mauriac, Francois, Le Baiser au Lepreux (2).

C

Tolstoy, Leo, A Confession and Other Religious Writings (5).

CL

Emerson, R.W., The Conduct of Life (5).

CP

Phillips, D.Z., The Concept of Prayer (1).

CS

Foucault, Michel, The Care of the Self: History of Sexuality, Vol.3 (4).

CV

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Culture and Value (1).

DA

Mauriac, Francois, Desert de l'Amour (2).

DC

Bernanos, Georges, Dialogues des Carmelite (3).

DE

Rilke, R.M., Duino Elegies (5).

DI

Phillips, D.Z., Death and Immortality (1).

DM

Mauriac, Francois, Dieu et Mammon (2).

EA

Winch, Peter, Ethics and Action (1).

EC

Feuerbach, L., The Essence of Christianity (5).

ES

White, Patrick, The Eye of the Storm (4).

FA

Phillips, D.Z., 'Ffydd Athronydd - Eglurdeb neu Atebion?' (1).

FAF

Phillips, D.Z., Faith After Foundationalism (1).

FATM

Dilman, Ilham, Freud and the Mind (1).

FL

White, Patrick, A Fringe of Leaves (4).

FLI

Foucault, Michel, Foucault Live (Interviews 1966-84) (4).

FPE

Phillips, D.Z., Faith and Philosophical Enquiry (1).

GE

Gaita, Raimond, Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception (1).

GG

Weil, Simone, Gravity and Grace (4).

GJB

Sutherland, Stewart, God, Jesus and Belief (1).

HAH

Hammelmann, H.A., Hugo von Hofmannsthal (5).

HHP

M. Hamburger, ed., Hugo von Hofmannsthal Poems and Verse Plays (5).

IE

Phillips, D.Z., Interventions in Ethics (1).

ISS

Winch, Peter, The Idea of a Social Science (1).

J

Bernanos, Georges, Journal d'un cure de campagne (3).

LE

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 'Lecture on Ethics' (1).

LHS

Dilman, Ilham, Love and Human Separateness (1).

LLC

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von, 'The Letter of Lord Chandos' (5).

LRB

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 'Lecture on Religious Belief' (1).

LSLW

Shields, P.R., Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1).

LWDG

Monk, Ray, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius (1).

M

Jenkins, Cecil, Mauriac (2).

MAJ

Mein, Margaret, 'Francois Mauriac and Jansenism' (2).

MGH

Mauriac, Francois, Mes Grands Hommes (2).

MN

Phillips, D.Z., 'My Neighbour and My Neighbours' (1).

MRB

Shooman, A.P., The Metaphysics of Religious Belief (1).

NB

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Notebooks 1914-16 (1).

NHM

Bernanos, Georges, Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette (3).

NV

Mauriac, Francois, Le Noeud de Viperes (2).

OC

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, On Certainty (1).

PI

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigations (1).

PM

Sharp, F.M., The Poet's Madness: A Reading of Georg Trakl (5).

POR

Tilghman, B.R., An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (1).

PPL

Dilman, Ihlam, Philosophy and the Philosophic Life (1).

RBLG

Phillips, D.Z., 'Religious Belief and Language-Games' (1).

RC

White, Patrick, Riders in the Chariot (4).

RFGB

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 'Remarks on Frazer's "Golden Bough"' (1).

RMRB

Brodsky, Patricia Pollock, Rainer Maria Rilke (5).

RMRG

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RMRH

Heerikhuizen, F.W. van, Rainer Maria Rilke (5).

RMRSW

Rilke, R.M., Selected Works (5).

RPW

Dilman, Ilham, 'Reason, Passion and the Will' (1).

RST

Phillips, D.Z., R.S. Thomas: Poet of the Hidden God (1).

RWE

Phillips, D.Z., Religion Without Explanation (1).

RWECW

Emerson, R.W., The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (5).



SG

Alvarez, A., The Savage God (5).

SILAR

Dilman, Ilham, Studies in Language and Reason (1).

SKPC

Dilman, Ilham, 'Self-Knowledge and the Possibility of Change' (1).

SOS

Taylor, Charles, Sources of the Self (1).

SRFD

Thomas, Emyr Vaughan, 'D.Z. Phillips, Self-Renunciation and the Finality of Death' (1).

SS

Bernanos, Georges, Sous le soleil de Satan (3).

SW

Winch, Peter, Simone Weil: The Just Balance (1).

TAW

Kerr, Fergus, Theology After Wittgenstein (1).

TD

Mauriac, Francois, Therese Desqueyroux (2).

TDJ

'Introduction' to Therese Desqueyroux (2).

TLP

Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1).

TS

James, Henry, The Turn of the Screw (1).

TTMS

Winch, Peter, Trying to Make Sense (1).

UPS

Winch, Peter, 'Understanding a Primitive Society' (1)

V

White, Patrick, Voss (4).

WA

Rhees, Rush, Without Answers (1).

WAP

Tolstoy, Leo, War and Peace (5).

WAR

Phillips, D.Z., Wittgenstein and Religion (1).

WAZ

Canfield, John, 'Wittgenstein and Zen' (1).

WEA

Tilghman, B.R., Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics (1).

WOTS

Dilman, Ilham, 'Wittgenstein on the Soul' (1).

WPRB

Coughlan, Michael, 'Wittgensteinian Philosophy and Religious Belief' (1).

WRPV

Malcolm, Norman, Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View (1).

WWR

Schopenhauer, Arthur, The World AS Will and As Representation. (Volume number indicated by capital Roman numerals in between the abbreviation and the page number) (5).

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One-off references are given, with full bibliographic details, and are not normally included below. The following bibliography consists of works which have either been cited a number of times or have been deemed valuable as background material. For reasons of space, only a selection of such background material is included.

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